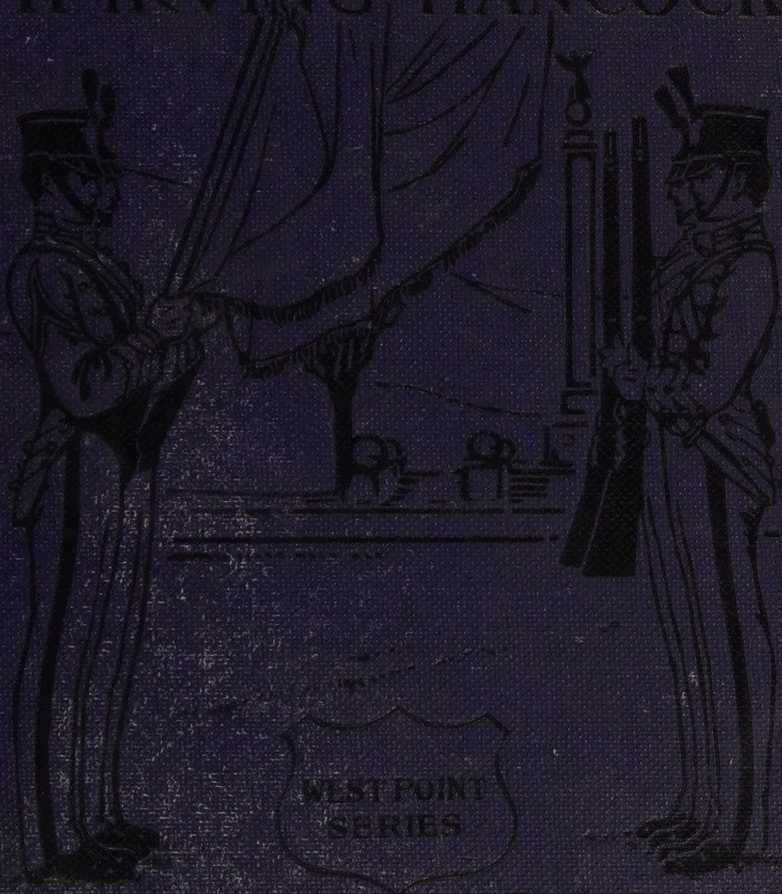
DICK PRESCOTT'S THIRD YEAR AT WEST POINT

H. IRVING HANCOCK



WEST POINT SERIES

George. Xmas 1942
Aunt Maisy

Mr. Dodge's Cane Crashed Through the Plate Glass Panel.

Dick Prescott's Third Year at West Point

OR

Standing Firm for Flag and Honor

By

H. IRVING HANCOCK

Illustrated

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Dick Prescott's Third Year at West Point

CHAPTER I

ON FURLOUGH IN THE OLD HOME TOWN

"MY son, Richard. He is home on his furlough from the United States Military Academy at West Point."

Words would fail in describing the natural motherly pride with which Mrs. Prescott introduced her son to Mrs. Davidson, wife of the new pastor.

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Prescott," said Mrs. Davidson, looking up, for up she had to glance in order to see the face of this tall, distinguished-looking cadet.

Dick Prescott's return bow was made with the utmost grace, yet without affectation. His natty straw hat he held in his right hand, close to his breast.

Mrs. Davidson was a sensible and motherly woman, who wished to give this young man the

pleasantest greeting, but she was plainly at a loss to know what to say. Like many excellent and ordinarily well-informed American people, she had but the haziest notions of West Point.

"You are learning to be a soldier, of course?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Davidson," replied Dick gravely. Neither in his face nor in his tone was there any hint of the weariness with which he had so often, of late, heard this aimless question repeated.

"And when you are through with your course there," pursued Mrs. Davidson, "do you enlist in the Army? Or may you, if you prefer, become a sailor in our—er—Navy?"

"Oh, I fear, Mrs. Davidson, that you don't understand," smiled Mrs. Prescott proudly. "My son is now going through a very rigorous four years' course at the Military Academy. It is a course that is superior, in most respects to a college training, but it is devoted to turning out commissioned officers for the Army. When Richard graduates, in two years more, he will be commissioned by the President as a second lieutenant in the Army."

"Oh, I understood you to say that you were training to become a soldier, Mr. Prescott," cried Mrs. Davidson in some confusion. "I did not understand that you would become an officer."

"An officer who is not also a good soldier is a most unfortunate and useless fellow under the colors," laughed Dick lightly.

"But it is so much more honorable to be an officer than to be a mere soldier!" cried the pastor's wife.

"We do not think so in the Army, Mrs. Davidson," Dick answered quietly. "An officer has more responsibility, to be sure, but we feel that the honor falls alike on men of all grades of position who are privileged to wear their country's uniform."

"But don't the officers look down on the common soldiers?" asked Mrs. Davidson curiously.

"If an officer does, then surely he has chosen the wrong career in life, madam," the cadet replied seriously. "We are not taught at West Point that an officer should 'look down' upon an enlisted man. There is a gulf of discipline, but none of manhood, between the enlisted man and his officer. And it frequently happens that the officer who is a graduate from West Point is called upon to welcome, as a brother officer, a man who has just been promoted from the ranks."

Mrs. Davidson looked puzzled, as, indeed, she was. But she suddenly remembered something that made her feel more at ease.

"Why, I saw an officer and some soldiers on a

train, the other day," she cried. "The officer had at least eight or ten soldiers with him, under his command. I remember what a fine-looking young man he was. He had what looked like two V's on his sleeve, and I remember that they were yellow. What kind of an officer is the man who wears the two yellow V's?"

"A non-commissioned officer, Mrs. Davidson; a corporal of cavalry."

"Was he higher than you'll be when you graduate from West Point?"

"No; a corporal is an enlisted man, a step above the private soldier. The sergeant is also an enlisted man, and above the corporal. Above the sergeant comes the second lieutenant, who is the lowest-ranking commissioned officer."

"Oh, I am sure I never could understand it all," sighed Mrs. Davidson. "Why don't they have just plain soldiers and captains, and put the captains in a different color of uniform? Then ordinary people could comprehend something about the Army. But in describing that young soldier's uniform, I forgot something, Mr. Prescott. That young soldier, or officer, or whatever he was, beside the two yellow V's, had a white stripe near the hem of his cuff."

"Just one white stripe?" queried Dick.

"Just one, I am sure."

"Then that one white stripe would show that

the corporal, before entering the cavalry, had served one complete enlistment in the infantry."

"Oh, this is simply incomprehensible!" cried the new pastor's wife in comical dismay. "I am certain that I could never learn to know all these things."

"It is a little confusing at first," smiled Dick's mother with another show of pride. "But I think I am beginning to understand quite a lot of it."

Mrs. Davidson went out of the bookstore conducted by Dick's parents in the little city of Gridley. Dick sighed a bit wearily.

"Why don't Americans take a little more pains to understand things American?" he asked his mother, with a comical smile. "People who would be ashamed not to know something about St. Peter's, at Rome, or the London Tower, are not quite sure what the purpose of the United States Military Academy is."

Yet, though some people annoyed him with their foolish questions, he was heartily glad to be back, for the summer, in the dear old home town. So was his chum, Greg Holmes, also a West Point cadet, and, like Prescott, a member of the new second class at the United States Military Academy. Both young men had now been in Gridley for forty-eight hours. They had met a host of old-time friends, including nearly

all of the High School students of former days.

Readers of "Dick Prescott's First Year at West Point" and of "Dick Prescott's Second Year at West Point," are familiar with the careers of the two chums, Prescott and Holmes, at the United States Military Academy. The same readers are also familiar with the life at West Point of Bert Dodge, a former Gridley boy, but who had been appointed a cadet from another part of the state. Our old readers are aware of the fact that Dodge had been forced out of the Military Academy for dishonorable conduct; that it was the cadets, not the authorities, who had compelled his departure, and that Dodge resigned and left before the close of his second year.

Readers of these volumes of the High School Boys' Series know all about Bert Dodge in the course of his career at Gridley High School. Dodge, back in the old days in Gridley, had been a persistent enemy of Dick & Co., as Prescott and his five chums had always been called in the High School. Of those five chums Greg, as is well known, was Dick's comrade at West Point. Dave Darrin and Dan Dalzell were now midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. Their adventures while learning to be United States Naval officers, are

fully set forth in The Annapolis Series. Tom Reade and Harry Hazelton had chosen to go West, where they became civil engineers engaged in railway construction through the wild parts of the country, as fully set forth in the Young Engineers' Series.

Just after Mrs. Davidson left the bookstore there were no customers left, so Dick had a few moments in which to chat with his mother.

"What has become of the fellow Dodge?" asked the young West Pointer.

"Oh, haven't I told you?" asked his mother. A shade of annoyance crossed her face, for she well knew that it was Dodge who, while at West Point, had nearly succeeded in having her son dismissed from the Service on a charge of which Dodge, not Dick, was guilty.

"No, mother; and I haven't thought to ask."

"Bert Dodge is here in Gridley at present. The Dodge family are occupying their old home here for a part of the summer."

"Do people here understand that Dodge had to resign from West Point in order to escape a court-martial that would have bounced him out of the Military Academy?" Dick inquired.

"No; very few know it. I have mentioned Dodge's disgrace to only one person beside your father."

"You told Laura Bentley?"

"Yes, Dick. She had a right to know. Laura has always been your loyal friend. When she reached West Point, last winter, expecting to go to a cadet hop with you, she remained at West Point until you had been tried by court-martial and acquitted on that unjust charge. Laura had a right to know the whole story."

"She surely had," nodded Dick.

"As to Gridley people in general," went on Mrs. Prescott, "I have not felt it necessary to say anything, and folks generally believe that Bert Dodge resigned from the corps of cadets simply because he did not find Army life to his liking."

"He wouldn't have found it to his liking had he chosen not to resign," smiled Prescott darkly.

"Are you going to say anything about Dodge while you are home?" inquired his mother, glancing up quickly.

"Not a word, if I can avoid it," replied Dick. "I hate tale-bearers."

At this moment the postman came in, blowing his whistle and rapidly sorting out a pile of letters, which he dropped on the counter.

"There are probably a lot here for me, mother," smiled Dick. "Shall I separate them from the business mail?"

"If you will, my boy."

Some dozen of the envelopes proved to be ad-

dressed to young Prescott. Of these two were letters from West Point classmates. Three more were from old friends in Gridley, sending him congratulations and expressing the hope of meeting him during his furlough. The remainder of the letters were mainly invitations of a social nature.

"Odd!" grinned the young soldier. "When I was merely a High School boy I could go a whole month without receiving anything resembling a social invitation. Now I am receiving them at the rate of a score a day."

"Well, a West Point cadet is some one socially, is he not?" smiled Mrs. Prescott.

"I suppose so," nodded Dick. "The truth is, a cadet has so much social attention paid to him that it is a wonder more of the fellows are not spoiled."

"Are you going to accept any social invitations while you are home?" asked his mother.

"That depends," Dick answered. "If invitations come from people who were glad to see me when I was a High School boy here, then I shall try to accept. But I don't care much about meeting the people who didn't care about meeting me two years ago. Here is a note from Miss Clara Deane, mother. She trusts that Greg and I can make it convenient to call at her home next Saturday afternoon, and meet some of her

friends. When I attended Gridley High School Miss Deane used to look down on me because I was a poor man's son. I believe her set referred to me as a 'mucker.' At least, the fellows of her set did. So I shall send Miss Deane a brief note of regret."

Dick continued to examine his mail while carrying on a running fire of talk with his proud and happy mother.

"Oh, here is a very nice note from Susie Sharp," he murmured, opening another epistle. "She is having quite a few friends at the house this afternoon, and she begs that Greg and I will be present. Miss Sharp was a very nice girl in the old days, although she and I never happened to be very particular friends. Now, I want to have all the time I can for my real friends of the old days."

"Miss Sharp would be very proud to entertain two men from West Point," suggested his mother.

"That's just the reason," Dick answered. "Miss Sharp invites us not because she was ever much a friend of ours, but simply because she is anxious to entertain two cadets. She probably reasons that it may give distinction to her afternoon tea, or whatever the affair is."

"Then you are not going?" asked Mrs. Prescott.

"I hardly think so. Not unless Greg wishes it."

The next envelope that Dick picked up was addressed in Laura Bentley's handwriting. Dick read for a moment, then announced:

"I have changed my mind. I shall go to call on Miss Sharp. Laura urges me to, saying that Miss Sharp has been very kind to her in the last year. If Laura wishes it, I'll go to call on any one."

At this moment Greg Holmes, tall, muscular, erect and looking as though he had just come from the tailor's iron, stepped cheerily into the store.

"Morning, old ramrod," hailed the other cadet. "I know you don't mind that kind of talk, Mrs. Prescott. It's our term of affection for Dick at West Point. Going through your invitations, are you? Aren't they the bore, though? Especially as we had very few invitations when we were High School boys in this same old town."

"You received one from Susie Sharp, of course?"

"Yes," Greg assented. "And I'm going—not!"

"You are going—yes!" Dick retorted.

"Oh!" nodded Greg. "Am I entitled to any explanation?"

"Laura wishes it."

"That's a whole platoon of reasons boiled down into one file-closer," grinned Greg. "Yes; I am going to visit Miss Sharp this afternoon."

"Have you heard that Bert Dodge is in town at present?"

"No!" muttered Greg. Then added tersely: "The b. j. (fresh) rascal! I wonder what folks here think of a sneak who was forced to resign by a cadet committee on honor?"

"Folks here don't know that Dodge was forced out of the Academy."

"Thank you for telling me," nodded Greg. "Then I shall know how to keep my mouth shut. Laura will be at Miss Sharp's this afternoon, of course?"

"Naturally. And Belle Meade, also."

"Then," proposed Greg, "suppose we 'phone the girls and ask if we may call this afternoon and escort them to Miss Sharp's. We must do something to show that we appreciate their loyalty in remaining at West Point last winter until your name was cleared of disgrace."

"Yes; we'll 'phone them," nodded Dick.

On both days, so far, that he had been home, Dick had called at Dr. Bentley's to see Laura. In fact, that was the only calling he had done, though he had met scores of friends on the street.

Both young ladies were pleased to accept the proffered escort.

"By the way," proposed Greg, "what are you going to do this morning?"

"Going out for a walk, for one thing," replied Dick. "I've talked to mother until she must have ear-ache on both sides, and feel tired of having me home."

"What do you say if we trot around and extract handshakes from some of the follows we used to pack schoolbooks with?" hinted Holmes. "For instance, Ennerton is down at the bank, in a new job. Foss is advertising manager in Curlham & Peck's department store. I know he'll be glad to see us if we don't take up too much of his employers' time. Then Ted Sanders——"

And so Greg continued to enumerate a lot of the old Gridley High School boys of whose present doings he had gotten track. Dick and Greg left the bookstore and started on the rounds to hunt up the best remembered of their old schoolmates.

And a pleasant morning they had of it. Though the sun poured down its heat over the little city, these two cadets, who had drilled for two summers on the blistering plain and the dusty roads at West Point, did not notice the warmth of the day.

In the afternoon, in good season, Dick called for Laura, waiting there until Belle Meade arrived under the escort of Greg.

"These West Pointers make the most correct and attentive escorts imaginable," laughed Belle. "But there's just one disadvantage connected with them."

"I hadn't noticed it," smiled Laura.

"Why, when Greg walks beside me, and holds my parasol, I feel as though I were in the street with my parasol tied to the Methodist steeple. Where's your rice powder, Laura? I'm sure the sun has made a sight of my nose and neck."

Laughing merrily, the young people set off for Miss Sharp's. The home was a comfortable one, with attractive grounds, for the elder Sharp was a well-to-do merchant. Some three score of young people were present, and of these nearly two thirds had belonged to the High School student body in the old High School days of Dick and Greg. Naturally, the young ladies outnumbered the young men by more than four to one.

"Oh, I am delighted that you two have come," cried Susie, moving forward to greet her cadet visitors. This was wholly true, for Miss Sharp had planned the affair solely in order to have the distinction of entertaining the young West Pointers. Had Dick and Greg remained away,

Susie, without doubt, would have been both disappointed and humiliated.

Through the connecting drawing rooms Dick and Greg moved with a grace and lack of consciousness greatly in contrast with their semi-awkwardness in their earlier High School days. Many pleasant acquaintances were renewed here.

Suddenly, Susie, catching a glimpse of the front walk, hastened out into the hallway. Then she came in, smiling eagerly, a well-dressed, pompous-looking young man at her side.

"Mr. Prescott! Mr. Holmes!" called Susie. "Here is an old comrade whom you both may be surprised to meet!"

Dick and Greg turned, and indeed, they were astonished. For the latest arrival was Bert Dodge!

"Howdy, fellows!" called Dodge carelessly, though inwardly he was quaking with alarm. How would these two decent cadets treat the fellow who had been kicked out of West Point for dishonorable acts?

Prescott bowed, but did not speak. Greg's line of conduct was identical with his chum's.

Bert turned white, at first, with mortification. Then a red flush set in at his neck, extending to his face and temples. But Dodge possessed "brass," if not honor, so he decided to face it out.

Turning to a young woman standing nearby, Bert spoke to her, and they laughed and chatted. From her, Bert passed through the room, nodding here, chatting there.

Dick and Greg, after the first look of amazement, followed by their cold bows, had turned to the old friends with whom they had been chatting.

In the course of a few minutes Bert Dodge had got along close to the two cadets.

"How are you, Prescott?" called Bert. "How is good old West Point? And you, Holmes—how are you?"

Dodge held out his hand with all the effrontery of which he was capable.

Turning, Dick gave the sneak only a cold, steady look.

CHAPTER II

BRASS MEETS GOLD

NEITHER Dick nor Greg took the trouble to answer the greeting. Dodge's outstretched hand both cadets affected not to see.

As it happened, few of the others present noted this brief little scene.

A natural break in the crowd left Dick alone for the moment, with Holmes standing not far away and looking coldly in the direction of the ex-cadet, yet not appearing to see him at all.

"Well, what's the matter?" hissed Dodge in an undertone that the other guests did not hear. "Are you going to make a fool of yourself, Prescott?"

"You'd better execute a right-about face and make double-time away from here," replied Dick in a freezing undertone. "Otherwise I don't believe the guests will fail to observe how West Pointers regard a convicted sneak."

"Are you going to open your mouth and do a lot of talking?" whispered Dodge menacingly. "Or are you going to keep your tongue behind your teeth?"

"I can't undertake to lower myself by making

any promises to a sneak," retorted Dick, still in an undertone. "But I warn you that any further conversation I have with you will be carried on in ordinary conversational tones. And if you undertake to remain, we shall be obliged to inform our hostess that we regret our inability to stay any longer."

Conscious that others were probably looking their way, Bert Dodge tried to make his face as expressionless as possible.

"See here, Prescott——" the fellow began coaxingly.

But Dick turned and walked away. Greg, very stiff and straight, moved at his friend's side.

Afraid of what others might notice, Dodge passed on. He presently reached a door leading into the hallway. Here he remained briefly. Then, when he believed himself to be unobserved, he slipped out, took his hat and got away.

A few minutes later, as Dick and Greg passed the door of a little reception room, Susie Sharp called them in quietly. They found her there alone.

"Oh, Mr. Prescott! Mr. Holmes! Have I made any mistake? I thought it would be a pleasant surprise to you both if I had Mr. Dodge here to meet you, as you all three were classmates at West Point. But I should have remem-

bered that in the old High School days you two and Mr. Dodge were not the best of friends."

There was an agitated catch in Susie's voice. Their young hostess was worried by the thought that she had invited jarring elements to meet.

"Why, to be candid, I don't believe Dodge ever admired either Greg or myself very much," replied Cadet Prescott evenly.

"But did I make a fearful mistake?" pleaded Susie.

"One cannot make a mistake who aims at the pleasure of others," Dick answered smilingly.

Somewhat reassured, Susie asked her cadet guests to return with her to the drawing rooms. There they joined a little group, and were chatting when a girl's voice reached them from a few feet away. The girl who was speaking did not realize that her tones carried as far as the ears of Dick and Greg as she explained to two other young women:

"Mr. Dodge said he resigned from the Military Academy because he could not stand the crowd there."

"I guess that's true," muttered Dick inwardly. "The crowd couldn't stand Dodge, either."

But Sam Foss made the conversation general by calling:

"How about that, Dick? I always thought West Point was a very select place. Bessie Frost says Dodge left West Point because he thought the fellows there rather below his grade socially."

"Perhaps they are," nodded Dick gravely, but in even tones. "I have heard it stated that about sixty per cent. of the cadets are the sons of wage-earners. Indeed, one of the cadets whom I most respect has not attempted to conceal the fact that, until he graduates and begins to draw officer's pay, his mother will have to continue to support herself at the washtub. That young man is now in the first class, and I can tell you that we are all mighty anxious to see that man graduate and find himself where he can look after a noble mother who has the misfortune to be unusually poor in purse."

"Then as an American, I'm proud of West Point, if it has fellows with no more false shame than that," cried Foss heartily.

"Why, I always thought West Point a very swell place, extremely so," murmured Bessie Frost. "In fact—pardon me, won't you—I have always heard that the young men at West Point are very much puffed up and very exclusive."

Dick laughed good-humoredly.

"Of course, Miss Frost, the cadet is expected to learn how to become a gentleman as well as

an officer. Yet why should any of us feel unduly conceited? We are privileged to secure one of the best educations to be obtained in the world, but we obtain it at public expense. Not only our education, but all our living expenses are paid for out of the nation's treasury, and that money is contributed by all tax-payers alike. If we of the cadet corps should get any notion that we belong to a superior race of beings, to whom would we owe it all? Are the cadets not indebted for their opportunities to all the citizens of the United States?"

"Did Bert Dodge have any especial trouble at West Point?" asked another girl.

"Mr. Dodge did not make us his confidants," evaded Dick coolly.

"What do you say, Mr. Holmes?" persisted the same girl.

"About the same that Dick does," replied Greg. "You see, there are several hundred cadets at West Point, and Dick and I were not in the same section with Dodge."

"Was he one of the capable students there?"

"Why, he was in a much higher section than either Dick or myself," admitted Greg truthfully; but he did not think it necessary to explain the trickery and cribbing by which Dodge had secured the appearance of higher scholarship.

At this point the tact and good sense of Miss Susie Sharp caused her to use her opportunities as hostess to break up the group and to start some new lines of conversation.

But Susie was uneasy, and presently she found a chance to whisper to Laura Bentley:

"Tell me, dear—what lies back of the fact that Mr. Dodge does not seem to be on good terms with Mr. Prescott and Mr. Holmes?"

"Did Bert Dodge know that Dick and Greg were to be here?" asked Miss Bentley.

"No; I wanted it to be a surprise on both sides."

"It must have been, my dear," smiled Laura. "The fact is that Dick and Greg are not on friendly terms with Mr. Dodge."

"Oh!" murmured Susie, moving away. "I am glad that it was no worse."

A large tent had been erected on one of the lawns. To this tent, later in the afternoon, Miss Sharp invited her guests. Here a collation had been served, with pretty accessories, by a caterer, and several waiters stood about to serve.

When the guests returned to the house they discovered that the rugs had been removed, and that an orchestra was now at hand to furnish music for dancing. Given music and a smooth floor, young people do not mind exertion on a hot June afternoon. Dancing was at once in

full swing. Nor did the young people leave until after six o'clock.

Greg escorted Belle Meade home, Dick walking with Laura. The two cadet chums met on Main Street a little later. They stood near a corner, chatting, when Bert Dodge came unexpectedly around the corner.

He saw the two cadets, changed color, then halted.

Neither Dick nor Greg checked their conversation, nor let it be known that they were aware of the ex-cadet's presence.

But Dodge, after looking at the chums sourly for a moment, stepped squarely in front of them.

"See here, you fellows——" he began, his voice sounding thickly.

"Have you the impudence to address us?" asked Prescott coolly.

"Don't talk to me about impudence!" snarled Dodge. "What did you two say about me, after I left this afternoon?"

"Oh, I assure you we didn't discuss you any more than was necessary," replied Dick frigidly.

"What did you say?" insisted Dodge.

"We couldn't say much about you," Greg broke in icily. "You know, you're hardly a fit subject for conversation."

"See here, you two fellows," warned Bert angrily, "you want to be mighty careful what

you say about me! Do you understand? A single unfriendly word, that does any injury to my reputation, and I'll take it out of you."

Prescott would not go to the length of sneering. He allowed an amused twinkle to show in his eyes.

"On your way, Dodge—that's the best course for you," advised Greg coldly. "We're not interested in your threats of fight, and you ought to know better, too, after some of the thumpings you've had."

"Fight?" jeered Dodge harshly. "You fellows seem to think you're still in cadet barracks, and that all you have to do is to call me out, and that my only recourse is to put up an argument before a class scrap committee. But you fellows aren't at West Point just now, and cadet committees don't run things here. You're back in civilization, where we have laws and regular courts. Now, if I find that you fellows are saying a single word against me I'll have you both arrested for criminal libel. I'll have you put through the courts, too, and sent to jail. Then, when you get out of jail, you can find out what your high and mighty West Point friends think of that!"

Dodge finished with a harsh, sneering laugh, then turned on his heel.

"The cheap skate!" muttered Greg, looking

after the retreating fellow. "Humph! I'd like to see him make any trouble for us!"

"He may try it," muttered Prescott, gazing thoughtfully after their ancient enemy.

"How?" demanded Greg. "We don't think him worth talking about among decent people, so we'll give him not the slightest chance to make any trouble."

"We won't give Dodge any real cause, of course," nodded Dick gravely. "But a scoundrel like Dodge doesn't need real cause. That young man has altogether more spending money than is good for his morals. Why, with his money, Greg, Dodge would know how to find people, apparently respectable, who would be willing to accept a price for perjuring themselves."

"Humph!" uttered Greg.

"If Dodge could get such testimony, and his perjurers would stick to their yarns," continued Dick, "then the young scoundrel might be actually able to carry out his threats."

"He wouldn't dare!"

"If it were anything high-minded and dangerous, Dodge wouldn't dare," admitted Dick. "But minds like his will dare a good deal to put through anything scoundrelly against people who try to be decent."

CHAPTER III

DICK & CO. AGAIN

"HEY, there, you galoot! You thin, long-drawn-out seven feet of tin soldier!" After having been home a week, Dick Prescott flushed as he wheeled about to meet this jeering greeting.

In another instant every trace of his wrath had vanished.

"Tom Reade!" hailed Dick in great delight, turning and rushing at his old High School chum. "And good little Harry Hazelton!"

It was, indeed, the young engineer pair, Reade and Hazelton, old-time members of Dick & Co., the great High School crowd of Gridley. Reade and Hazelton, after finishing at the High School, had gone out to Colorado to serve under the engineer in charge of a great piece of railway construction work. The adventures of Tom and Harry, in the wild spots of the West, are fully set forth in the volumes of the YOUNG ENGINEERS' SERIES.

"The last fellow I expected to meet in Gridley!" cried Dick, overflowing with delight as he stuck out both hands at once and grasped theirs.

"Well, we are, aren't we?" demanded Reade.

"You are—what?"

"The last fellows you've met in Gridley. But where's Greg?"

"If he's out of bed," grinned Prescott, "he's in cit. clothes."

"Carrying a rifle and marching the lock-step—the route-step, I mean—has dulled your brain," growled Tom Reade. "Is Greg in Gridley?"

"What scoundrel is taking my name in vain?" demanded Holmes, coming upon the trio.

Then there were hearty greetings, all over again. But in the end Reade looked Greg over from head to foot.

"Do they make you sleep on a stretcher at West Point?" Tom wanted to know. "Or what do they do, to pull a pair of galoots out to the length that you two have attained."

"It's the physical training and the military drills," explained Prescott, laughing. "But my! You fellows look like the Indian's head on a copper cent!"

Tom and Harry were, indeed, highly bronzed by the hot southwestern sun. Harry, in fact, was well on the way to being black, so burned had he become by his last few months of work.

"I hope, if you fellows are ever allowed to go forth into the Army, you'll get your first station down in Arizona," teased Tom.

"I don't," retorted Greg, "if it will make us look like you two."

"Oh, it won't," broke in Harry mockingly. "You see, we have to work down in Arizona. But you fellows wouldn't. We've seen something of the soldiery down in that part of the world, and they're the laziest crowd you ever saw. Why, the Army officers in Arizona sleep all day and grumble about the heat all night. They have tame Apaches to do their work for them. Oh, no, you wouldn't suffer down in Arizona!"

"But how do you fellows come to be home at this time?" asked Dick.

"Homesick!" sighed Tom. "The fellows in our engineer corps are entitled to some leave. So Harry and I waited until we had enough leave piled up, and then we started back for Gridley."

"Well, it's hot on this corner," muttered Greg, "and there's an ice cream place down the block, where the electric fans are going. Let's make a raid on the place. Do you fellows remember when we were happy if we could buy a ten-cent plate and then get by ourselves with six spoons to dip into the ice cream? Come on! Let's get good and square for those days."

"Yes; it is hot here on this corner," assented Dick.

"Hot?" demanded Reade impatiently.

"Humph! Harry and I were just regretting that we hadn't worn our top coats to-day. We came to Gridley to cool off, and this old town seems like a heaven of coolness after the baked-brown alkali deserts of Arizona."

"Double orders for each one of us," explained Harry, after the quartette of one time High School chums had seated themselves under a buzzing fan.

Now, the chums of old days had time to look each other over more closely.

Tom and Harry were taller than in the old High School days, but they had not quite reached the height of Dick and Greg. Both of the young civil engineers, besides being heavily bronzed, were thin and sinewy looking. Thin as they were, both looked the pictures of health. Though Tom and Harry did not "advertise" their tailors as well as did the two West Point cadets, nevertheless the pair of young civil engineers looked prosperous. They had the general air of being the kind of young men who are destined to succeed splendidly in life.

Before the ice cream—the first double order, that is—reached the table, all of the young men were plunged into stories of their adventures during the last two years. Readers of these two series are familiar with the adventures that the young men discussed.

"You've been getting a heap more excitement out of life, you two," Prescott admitted frankly. "Still, from my point of view, I wouldn't swap with you."

"Just as bughouse on West Point and the Army as ever, are you?" quizzed Hazelton.

"Just as much, and always will be," Dick nodded, beaming.

"I can't share your enthusiasm," laughed Hazelton. "We've seen the Army in the West, and they're a lazy, little-account lot."

Instead of getting angry, however, Dick and Greg laughed outright.

"I wish we had you at West Point for forty-eight hours, right in barracks and Academic Building," declared Greg, his eyes dancing. "Whew! But you'd be able to view real work from a new angle!"

"Oh, maybe at West Point," nodded Hazelton teasingly. "But afterwards, in the Army, it's just one dream of indolence."

"Well, what do the Army officers actually do, out your way?" challenged Greg.

"Why, they—well, they——"

"You don't know a blessed thing about it, do you?" dared Greg. "I thought not. You see, we do know something about what Army officers do with their time. That's what we're learning at West Point."

"Don't let's fight," pleaded Tom pathetically. "Fellows, we may never meet again. Before another year rolls around Hazelton and I may have been scalped and burned by the Apaches, and you fellows may have died at West Point, from nervous prostration brought on by over-eating and lack of exercise. So let's be good friends during the little time that we may have together."

"When you get time," put in Dick dryly, "you might as well tell us when you reached Gridley."

"After ten o'clock last night," supplied Harry. "Of course, we had to go home first. But this morning we set out to find you. We knew, of course, that any place would be likelier than your homes, so we tried Main Street first."

"Many folks were glad to see you?" asked Tom.

"Too many," sighed Dick. "That remark doesn't apply to any old friends, but there are a good many who always turned up their noses at us in the old days. Now, just because we're cadets, and because half-baked Army officers are supposed to be somebody in the social world, Greg and I are getting so much social mail that we fear we shall have to hire a secretary for the summer."

"Nobody will bother *us,* I guess," grimaced

Tom. "Most people here probably think that, because we're engineers, we run locomotives. That's what the word 'engineer' suggests to ignoramuses. Now, the man who runs a locomotive should properly be called an engine-tender, or engineman, while it's the fellow who surveys and bosses the building of a railroad that is the engineer. You get a smattering of engineering work at West Point, don't you?"

"We've been at math. and drawing, so far," Dick explained. "That all leads up to the engineering instruction that we shall have to take up in September."

"Oh, I dare say you'll get a very fair smattering of engineering," assented Tom. "It's nothing like the real practice that we get, though, out in the field with the survey and construction parties. I guess you fellows, after your grind in the High School, found West Point math. pretty easy, didn't you?"

Dick laughed merrily before he answered:

"Tom, the math. that a fellow gets in High School would take up about three months at West Point. How are you on math., now?"

"Oh, not so fearfully rotten," replied Reade complacently. "Harry and I have had to dig up a lot of new math. since we've taken on with an engineering corps in the field. Harry, trot

up some of the kind of mathematics that we have to use."

"Wait a moment," put in Dick. "Greg, sketch out an easy one from the math. problems we have to dig into at West Point. Give 'em something light from conic sections first."

Cadet Holmes sketched out, on the back of an envelope, the demonstration of a short problem.

Tom and Harry looked on laughingly, at first. Then their eyes began to open.

"Do you really have to dig up that sort of stuff at West Point?" demanded Reade.

"Yes," nodded Dick. "And now I'll show you another easy one, belonging to descriptive geometry."

The two young engineers looked on and listened for a few moments.

"Stop!" commanded Hazelton, at last. "My head is beginning to buzz!"

"If that's the sort of gibberish you have to learn, I'm more than ever glad that I didn't go to West Point," proclaimed Reade.

The old-time chums had eaten their fill of ice cream some time before, but they still sat about the table, chatting gayly.

"There's one thing you never really told us about in your letters," muttered Tom. "You wrote us that Bert Dodge had resigned from

the Military Academy, but you didn't tell us why. Now, that fellow, Dodge, never gave up anything good that he didn't have to give up. Was he kicked out of the Academy?"

"That story isn't known in Gridley," replied Prescott, lowering his voice. "Dodge tells people that he left because he didn't like the crowd or the life there. We haven't changed the story any since our return. We'll tell you fellows, for we never used to have any secrets from you in the old days. But you mustn't pass the yarn around."

"No," grimaced Greg. "You mustn't tell the story around. Dodge has threatened to have us imprisoned for life, for criminal libel, if we allow his secret to reach profane ears."

"Just why did Dodge leave West Point?" asked Reade.

"He was invited to," replied Prescott, "by a class committee on honor."

"I thought it was something like that," grunted Reade.

Then, in low tones that could not be overheard by other patrons of the ice cream place, Dick Prescott told the story of Dodge's cribbing at West Point, and of the way that Bert nearly succeeded in palming his guilt off on to Prescott.

"I'd believe every word of that yarn, even if a plumb stranger told it to me," declared Hazel-

ton. "It has all the earmarks of truth. It's a complete story of just what Bert Dodge would do, in one form or another, in any walk in life."

"But you fellows won't repeat it?" insisted Dick.

"And thereby have us consigned to prison cells for the balance of our unworthy lives?" mocked Greg.

"You know us better than to think that we'd blab," retorted Tom half indignantly.

"You had a right to know, though," Prescott went on.

"Dick & Co. always were a close corporation," laughed Hazelton. "And I hope the time will never come when we can't tell our secrets to each other."

"I am sorry you fellows have so short a leave," murmured Dick.

"Why? What would you want us to do?" queried Tom.

"Greg and I would be tickled to death if you were going to be here all summer," Dick answered. "In the first place, just for the sake of having your company. In the next place, we'd think it great if you could go back to West Point with us when our furlough is over. If you could be there, over a Saturday and a Sunday, we'd have time to show you a lot about the life there. You'd feel acquainted from the

start, for lots of the fellows of our class have heard about you. You'd get a great reception."

"Gridley must seem dull, after your life in the West," mused Cadet Holmes.

"Oh, I don't believe there's any place where you get excitement all the time," declared Tom. "And there's no place so dull that it doesn't have a little excitement once in a while."

Bang! bang! bang! sounded several sharp explosions of firearms out in the street.

"There's some, right now!" muttered Greg, jumping up. "Come along!"

Bang! bang! bang!

As they ran forward toward the door of the ice cream place the young men saw people fleeing in frantic haste along Main Street.

Five or six of these fugitives darted into the ice cream place. As they did so, Chief of Police Simmons backed into the same doorway. He had his revolver in his right hand, while he called back over his shoulder to the owner of the store:

"Granby, telephone the station for my reserves. The Indians and cowboys of the Wild West Medicine Show are on a rampage, and shooting up Gridley. Tell Sergeant Cluny, from me, to bring the reserves on the run!"

Bang! bang! bang!

Up the street came a picturesque, dangerous-

looking group. Three men in cowboy hats, flannel shirts and "chaps," with revolver holsters dangling from their belts, and each with a pair of automatic revolvers in his hands, came along. Just behind this trio were two Indians, painted and wearing gaudy blankets. The Indians were armed like the cowboys. It was evident that all the members of the wild band were partially intoxicated.

Bang! bang! bang!

"Get back into the store, you young men!" ordered Chief Simmons crisply. "These heathen are pie-eyed and they'll shoot you up quicker than a flash!"

"Who? That lot of freaks?" demanded Tom contemptuously. "Dick! Greg! Indians are the specialty of the Army. You go after the redskins, while Harry and I tame these bad men!"

Like a flash, ere Chief Simmons could interfere, the four young men were off. Straight up to the "raiders" dashed the former High School boys.

One of the Indians wheeled, firing a fusilade just over Prescott's head.

"Oh, stop that noise!" ordered Dick dryly.

Before the Indian could guess it, Prescott had leaped in, had grabbed the redskin by a famous old Gridley football tackle and had sent the

rampaging Indian to the ground. Greg, equally reckless, floored the other Indian and sat on his chest.

Tom Reade made a bolt for the fiercest-looking cowboy.

"Stop spoiling the pure air on a hot day, and give me those guns!" commanded Reade, going straight at the fellow.

The big cowboy wheeled, aiming both weapons at Reade.

"Get back!" ordered the shooter. "If ye don't I'll pump ye full of hole-makers! I'm bad! I'm a wolf, and this is my day to howl. I'm a wolf—d'ye catch that, partner?"

"Then back to the menagerie for yours!" muttered Reade dryly. "And first of all fork those guns over. You're making the air smell of sulphur."

"Get back! I'm bad, I tell ye!"

"You, bad; you cheap Piute from Rhode Island!" sniffed Tom contemptuously.

Reaching forward, quick as a flash, Reade twisted a revolver from the fellow's left hand.

"Now, pass me the other," continued Tom. "If you don't I'll wring that wooden head of yours from your neck! I'm coming, now!"

Having tossed the captured revolver in the street behind him, Reade made a sudden leap at the "bad wolf."

"Hold on!" cried the fellow sheepishly. "Don't get excited. Here it is; take it!"

Seeing how readily their companion had surrendered, the other two heeded Hazelton's demand for their weapons.

From the doorway Chief Simmons had looked on at this brief, bloodless battle like one dazed.

From up and down Main Street, at respectful distances, crowds of Gridleyites gazed in stupefied wonder.

"Come on out, Chief, and talk to these naughty boys!" called Tom good-humoredly. "They didn't mean to be troublesome, but Fourth of July had got into their blood."

The police reserves came running up now. First of all, the revolvers of the five wild ones were gathered up. Then the officers turned to the prisoners that had been captured by the West Point cadets and the Young Engineers.

"These fellows are only medicine-show cowboys," Tom explained, with a grin, to the chief of police. "I know the real kind—and these sorry specimens are not it. Probably these fellows have never been west of Ohio."

"You're an Indian, I'm pretty sure," said Cadet Prescott to the painted redskin whom he now held by one arm. "But you're a tame Indian. What part of Maine do you come from?"

"Yes, I'm an Indian," grinned Dick's cap-

tive. "I own a farm on the east end of Long Island."

"Humph! You've been through the public schools, too?" demanded Dick.

"Yes, sir."

Greg's Indian was quite as docile. The police now had the weapons of all the party, except one automatic weapon that Greg was examining.

"Yah!" grinned Holmes. "This gun is loaded with blank cartridges. I guess all the others were, too."

The guess was a wholly correct one.

By this time the Main Street crowd, wholly over its fright, was crowding about the police and their captives.

"Say, this seems like old times!" called Sam Foss, laughingly. "Dick & Co. right in the thick of the excitement."

"There hasn't been any," grinned Prescott.

At this instant a new actor arrived on the scene. Wild Charlie, the Indian medicine "doctor," immaculate in black frock suit and patent leather shoes, with a handsome sombrero spread over the glistening black hair that hung down over his shoulders, rushed up.

"Let these people go, Chief," begged the picturesque quack doctor. "I'll pay for any damage they've done."

Chief Simmons looked the long-haired "doctor" over with a broad grin.

"You're Wild Charlie, are you?" demanded the chief.

"Yes, partner."

"What part of Vermont do you come from? Or is Germany your hailing place, Wild Charlie?"

"Don't josh me too hard, Chief," pleaded the medicine fakir. "Will you let my people go, if I settle?"

"These terrors," retorted Chief Simmons, "are about due for thirty days apiece for disturbing the peace."

"But that would bust my summer season, Chief," pleaded "Wild Charlie."

"Oh, don't run these innocents in, Chief," urged Tom Reade. "They aren't really bad, and they admitted it as soon as we told 'em so. These people are not dangerous—only a bit nervous."

"See here, Wild Charlie," grinned the chief of police, "I don't want to do anything to make you wilder. "I'll let these human picture books go on condition that you take your show at once and clear on out of town."

"I may just as well go," sighed the long-haired one. "This job has ruined my business here. And say, Chief, won't you break the guns

and knock the cartridges out, and then let me have the guns, too? They cost a lot of money!"

But on this point Chief Simmons was firm.

"No, sirree! You can take your infant terrors and load them on the first train away from here. But the revolvers are confiscated, Wild Charlie, and they'll stay here. You can try to recover the revolvers by a civil suit, if you want to risk it in court. Otherwise, make your getaway as fast as you can. I'll admit that your outfit had the josh on me, and had me tickling the wire for the reserves. But just now the town holds two West Point cadets, and two young engineers from the real West, which makes Gridley no place to turn a vaudeville powder-play loose in."

"Wild Charlie" and his band fled as fast as they could, for the crowd was jeering loudly and talking of taking all six to the nearest horse-trough for a ducking.

"Is that the best the old town can do for excitement in these days?" laughed Reade, as soon as our young friends had separated themselves from the laughing crowd and had started on a stroll.

"Why, that little episode was doing well enough for any town," smiled Dick. "A laugh is better than a fight, any day."

"Queer text for a soldier to preach from," grinned Hazelton.

"Not a bit," Dick retorted. "The soldier, above all men, hates a fight, for the soldier knows he's the only one that's likely to get hurt."

"Oho!"

"Yes; and moreover," broke in Greg, "armies aren't organized, in the first place, for fighting, but for preserving peace."

"Just as railroads are built to keep people from traveling," jeered Reade.

"If we don't look out the greatest excitement that we'll find to-day will be starting a fight among ourselves," warned Harry dryly.

"Rot!" scoffed Tom. "The old chums of Dick & Co. couldn't fight each other, any more than they can avoid joshing each other."

Though none of the chums guessed it, excitement enough for two of them, possibly, was brewing in another part of Gridley at that moment.

Bert Dodge was talking almost in whispers with a young fellow named Fessenden, who had lately been discharged from the bank in which Bert's father was vice president.

"You do my trick—put it through for me, Fessenden—and I'll do my best with my father to get you back in the bank," Bert promised.

"Even if I fail in that, I'll pay you well, in addition to the money I've just given you."

"Oh, it won't be a hard job to put through," nodded young Fessenden, understandingly. "I can find two fellows who have nerve enough, and who will go into court and swear to anything I want them to."

"That's the talk!" glowed young Dodge. "You will testify that Dick Prescott was talking with you, and that he told innumerable lies to blacken my name—that he libeled me!"

CHAPTER IV

WHAT ABOUT MR. CAMERON?

ONE place that Dick Prescott made it a point to visit early in his furlough was the office of the morning "Blade," for which paper, in his old High School days, the cadet had worked as a local reporter "on space."

A "space writer" is one who is paid so much per column for all matter of his that is published in the paper.

Had it not been for the "Blade" Dick Prescott would not have been as well supplied with pocket money as he had been during his High School days.

Everyone about the "Blade" office, in the old days, had expected that Prescott, at the end of his High School course, would join the "Blade" staff as a "regular." But Dick had had his own plans about West Point, although he had kept his intentions a secret from nearly every one but his chums.

Early one bright June afternoon Dick strolled into the "Blade" office.

"Why, hullo, my boy!" cried Editor Pollock, jumping up out of his chair and coming forward, hand outstretched. Bradley, the news editor,

and Len Spencer, the "star" reporter, now growing comically fat, rushed forward to meet the cadet.

"Sit down, Dick, and let's hear all about West Point," urged Mr. Pollock, placing a chair beside his own, while the other members of the staff crowded about. "What sort of a place is West Point, and how do you like it there?"

Dick smilingly gave them a lively account of life at the United States Military Academy.

"I hope you're keeping track of all this, Len," nodded the editor to Reporter Spencer. "Tell us plenty more, too, Dick. We want to give you and Holmes at least a bully two-column write-up."

Dick's cheery look suddenly changed to one of mild alarm.

"Do you want to do me a big favor, Mr. Pollock?"

"Anything up to a page, my boy, and you know it," replied the editor heartily. "We still regard you as one of the 'Blade' family."

"The favor I'm going to ask, Mr. Pollock, is that you don't give Greg and myself a write-up."

The editor looked so hurt that Prescott made haste to add, earnestly:

"Please don't misunderstand me, Mr. Pollock. But you simply cannot imagine the trouble that a fine write-up in a home paper may make

for a cadet. If I were a plebe, now, the upper classmen would get hold of the write-up, somehow, and they'd make me read it aloud, at least a hundred times, while upper classmen stood about and congratulated me on being such a fine fellow as the paper described. As Greg and I are now second classmen, we couldn't be hazed in quite that way. But the other fellows would find some other way of using that home-paper write-up as a club for pounding us every now and then. Mr. Pollock, believe me, the cadet is mighty lucky whose home paper doesn't say anything about him."

"What is the matter?" asked the editor gravely. "Are the other cadets jealous?"

"No; it isn't that," Prescott answered. "That sort of thing is done, at West Point, to keep cadets from getting the 'big head.' Probably your memory goes back easily to the Spanish War days. You will remember that Mr. Hobson, of the Navy, sank the Merrimac in the harbor at Santiago, so that the Spanish ships, when they got out, had to come out in single file. Mr. Hobson had a younger brother then at the Military Academy. Well, the story still runs at West Point that Military Cadet Hobson was forced to read aloud all the best things about his brother in the Navy that the other cadets could find in the newspapers. Be-

sides that, Cadet Hobson, so we are told to-day, had to 'sail' chips on a tub of water, at the same time bombarding the chips with pebbles and cheering for his brother. At West Point it doesn't pay a cadet to be famous, even in the light of reflected glory. Now, that is why I asked you, and why I still beg you, not to give Greg and myself the write-up that you propose."

"All right, then," sighed the editor.

"On the other hand, Mr. Pollock, I'll tell you all manner of lively and printable facts about West Point, if you won't mention Greg or myself, or even mention the fact that Gridley has any cadets at the Military Academy."

"That will have to answer," nodded Mr. Pollock. "But we wanted to do something big for you, Dick."

"And you'll be doing something very big for us, if you don't mention us at all," smiled Prescott.

So the "Blade" had a good deal of interesting reading about West Point the next morning. Many Gridleyites were not satisfied because neither Prescott nor Holmes was mentioned in connection with the Military Academy.

The second time that Mr. Pollock met his former reporter was on the street.

"I've been kicking myself, Dick, because I forgot something the other day," declared the

editor. "I have one of the nicest, gentlest little trotting mares in this part of the state, and a very comfortable light buggy with top and side curtains. I hardly ever use the rig in hot weather. Now, won't you often have use for a horse and buggy while you're at home? If so, just ring up Getchel's Livery at any time, day or night, and tell 'em to hitch up against your coming. Will you?"

Dick tried hard to find words in which to thank Mr. Pollock for the generous offer.

First of all, Prescott took Holmes out driving, one forenoon, to "try out" the mare. The little animal proved speedy but tractable—a wholly safe driving horse.

"I'm not a betting man," quoth Greg, "but I'll lay a wager that I can guess who gets the next drive behind this horse."

"Post your wager," laughed Dick gayly.

"Lau——"

"Wrong! My mother gets the next drive."

And so she did, that same afternoon. But the following afternoon Prescott, after a good deal of attention to his personal appearance, walked to Getchel's and drove away from there behind the mare. The next stop was at the house of Dr. Bentley.

Yet, when Cadet Prescott caught his first glimpse of the broad, cool veranda of the doc-

tor's house, the young man felt a sudden throb of the heart.

Another young man—he looked to be somewhat under thirty—was seated in a big rocker, close to Laura. Both young people were laughing gayly before Miss Bentley caught sight of Dick.

"You're occupied, I see," called Prescott lightly, though the tone cost him an effort.

"Come right up, Dick," called Laura, so the cadet leaped from the buggy, hitching the horse. Then he turned into the broad walk and gained the veranda, where he was presented to Mr. Cameron.

Mr. Cameron greeted the cadet pleasantly, yet didn't seem overjoyed at his presence. Nor did Mr. Cameron seem in the least inclined to take himself away.

Usually most self-possessed, Dick Prescott fidgeted a trifle, and felt uncomfortable now. He wondered if good taste did not call for him to take himself away after a brief conversation.

It was Laura who finally came to the rescue.

"Dick," she laughed, "there's something on your mind. I'm afraid I shall have to help you out. Did you come to ask me to go driving?"

"Yes," Dick nodded. "But of course I realize that some other time will be better."

"Oh, don't let me spoil fun," begged Mr.

Cameron, half rising, as though hoping to be asked to seat himself again.

"Mr. Cameron," Miss Bentley replied sweetly, rising also as her caller completed the act of getting upon his feet, "I know you will excuse me now, rude as it seems in me to ask it. But Mr. Prescott's time in Gridley is very limited, and we are all anxious to see as much of him as possible."

"Say no more, Miss Bentley," begged Mr. Cameron, forcing a genial smile. "Mr. Prescott, I congratulate you on having such a good champion. Good afternoon, Laura. Good afternoon, Mr. Prescott; I am very glad indeed to have had the pleasure of meeting you."

"I am most happy to have met you, sir; if it were not for my own great good fortune, and my natural selfishness, I would feel most regretful over being the means of distracting Miss Bentley's attention."

Laura, as soon as she had extended her hand to Mr. Cameron, had run inside to get her hat. By the time that Mr. Cameron had reached the front gate Laura came out again, adjusting a wonderfully becoming bit of headgear.

"I am almost ashamed of myself for having spoiled another's call," Prescott told her.

"Oh, don't mind about Mr. Cameron," laughed Laura lightly. "He has plenty of op-

portunity, if he enjoys it, to call at other seasons of the year."

"Oh! Does he?" muttered Dick. He began to feel a most unwarrantable dislike for Mr. Cameron.

CHAPTER V

ALONG A "DANGEROUS" ROAD

"OH, yes," smiled Laura. "Mr. Cameron is a frequent visitor."

This information had the effect of making Prescott almost feel that he would enjoy kicking that other young man.

"You are old friends, then?" he asked lightly, as he tucked the thin carriage robe about Laura, then picked up the lines.

"No; quite recent acquaintances. We met about four months ago, I think it was."

Though she spoke with apparent indifference, Prescott covertly caught sight of a slight flush rising to the girl's face.

"After all," muttered Dick inwardly, "why not? Laura isn't a schoolgirl any longer, and it certainly must be difficult for any young man who has the chance to call to keep away from her!"

So Cadet Prescott tried to persuade himself that it was all very natural for Mr. Cameron to call and for Laura to be glad to see Mr. Cameron. Dick even tried to feel glad that Laura was receiving attentions—but the effort ended in secret failure.

Then Dick, as he drove along, tried to tell himself that he didn't care, and that he hadn't any right to care—but in this also he fell short of success with himself.

So he fell silent, without intending to. Laura, on her part, tried to make up for his silence by chatting pleasantly, but after a while she, too, found herself out of words.

Then, for a mile, they drove along almost in complete silence. Yet Cadet Prescott found plenty of chance to eye her covertly. What he saw was a beautiful girl, so sweet and wholesome looking that he had hard work, indeed, to keep ardent words from rushing to his lips.

"She grows sweeter and finer all the time," he muttered to himself. Why shouldn't men be eager to call, often and long?"

At last the mare stumbled slightly, and Prescott jerked the animal so quickly and almost savagely on the lines that Miss Bentley looked at him with something of a start.

"Dick," spoke Laura at last, turning and looking him frankly, sweetly in the eyes, "have I done anything to offend you?"

"You, Laura?"

"I wondered," she continued. "You have been so very silent."

"I am afraid I was thinking," muttered Dick. "And that's a very rude thing to do when it

makes one seem to ignore the lady who is with him," he added, forcing a smile. "I beg your pardon, Laura, ten times over."

"Oh, I don't mind your being abstracted," she answered simply, "so long as I am not the cause of it."

"You——"

Dick checked himself quickly.

He had been right on the point of admitting that she had been the cause of his abstraction, and such a statement as that would have called for an abundance of further explanation.

So he forced himself into a peal of laughter that sounded nearly natural.

"If I were to tell you what a ridiculous thing I was thinking about, Laura!" he chuckled.

Then his West Point training against all forms of deceit led him to wondering, at once, whether Mr. Cameron could truthfully be defined as "a ridiculous thing."

"Tell me," smiled the girl patiently.

"Not I," defied Prescott gayly. "Then you would find me more ridiculous than the thing about which I was thinking."

"Oh!" she replied, and the cadet fancied that his companion spoke in a tone of more or less hurt.

But, at least, Dick could look straight into her face now, as they talked, and every instant he

realized more and more keenly how lovely Miss Bentley was growing to be.

They were driving down sweet-scented country lanes now. The whole scene fitted romance. The cadet remembered Flirtation Walk, at West Point, and it struck him that there was danger, at the present moment, of Flirtation Drive.

"I wonder what the dear girl is thinking about at this present moment?" pondered Dick.

"I wonder what it was that made him so abstracted, and then so suddenly merry?" was the thought in Miss Bentley's mind.

"That was a very pretty road we came through before we turned into this one," commented Dick at a hazard.

"I didn't notice it," replied Laura. "Where are we now? Oh, yes! I know the locality now."

"You have driven out here before—with Mr. Cameron?"

The words were out ere Cadet Prescott could recall them. He felt indescribably angry with himself. In the first place, the question he had asked was really none of his business. In the second place, his inquiry, under the circumstances, was a rude one.

"Mr. Cameron was in the party," Laura replied readily. "There were quite a number of

us; it was a 'bus ride one May afternoon. We came out to gather wild flowers."

"If I had the right," flamed up within the cadet, "I'd soon make Mr. Cameron my business, or else I'd be some of his. But it wouldn't be fair. I'm not through West Point yet, and I may never be. Until my future is fairly assured I'm not going to ask the sweetest girl on earth to commit her future to my hands. Even if I felt that I could, a cadet is forbidden to marry and a two years' engagement is a fearfully long one to ask of a girl. And a girl like Laura has a chance to meet hundreds of more satisfactory fellows than I in two years."

It required all the young soldier's will power to keep silent on the one subject uppermost in his mind. And even Dick realized that some very trivial circumstance was likely to unseat his firm resolve.

What he was trying to act up to was his sense of fairness. Hard as it was under the circumstances, he was more anxious to be fair to this girl than to any other living being.

"I mustn't spoil her afternoon, just because my own mind is so dizzy!" he thought reproachfully.

So, a moment later, he became merrier than ever—on the surface.

It was Laura's turn to take a covert look at

his face. She wondered, for she felt that Prescott's assumed gayety had an almost feverish note.

"How much further are you going to drive?" she asked presently.

"The only pleasure I recognize in the matter, Laura, is yours. So I am wholly at your command."

He tried to answer lightly and gallantly, yet felt, an instant later, that his words had had a strained sound.

The same thought had struck the girl.

Yet, instead of asking him to turn the horse's head about, Laura ventured:

"Gridley must be pleasant, as your home town, yet I fancy you are already looking forward to getting back to your ideals at West Point?"

"Is she tired of having me around?" wondered Cadet Prescott, wincing within, as though he had been stabbed.

"I'm keener for West Point, every day, Laura," he answered quietly. "Yet, even in the case of such a grand old place as the Military Academy, it is worth while to get away once in a while. If it were not for this long furlough, midway in the four years' course, many of us might go mad with the incessant grind."

"Oh, you poor Dick!" cried Laura Bentley,

in quick, genuine sympathy. "Yes; I think I can quite understand what you say."

And then a new light came into her eyes, as she added, very softly:

"We in Gridley, who hope for you with your own intensity of longings, must take every pains to make this furlough of yours restful enough and full enough of happiness to send you back to West Point with redoubled strength for the grind."

"The same Laura as of yesterday!" cried Dick with sincere enthusiasm. "Always wondering how to make life a little sweeter for others!"

"Thank you," she half bowed quietly. "Yes; I want to see your strength proven among strong men."

Again she looked frankly into Prescott's eyes, and he, at the same moment, into hers. His pulses were bounding. What was to become, now, of his resolution to hold back the surging words for at least two more years?

Yet resolutely he stifled the feelings that surged within him. He was a boy, though the training at West Point was swiftly making him over into a man.

"I may lose her," groaned Cadet Prescott. "I may have lost her already—if I ever had any chance. But a soldier has at least his honor to

think of, and no honorable man can ask a woman to give herself to him, and to wait for years, when he isn't reasonably certain he is going to be able to meet the responsibility that he seeks."

Never had Prescott been more earnest, more serious, nor more attentive than during the remainder of that drive. Yet he studiously refrained from giving the girl any hint of the thoughts that were surging within him.

Was he foolish?

Dick felt, anyway, that he was not, for he was waging a mighty fight to stand by his best sense of honor.

CHAPTER VI

THE SURPRISE THE LAWYER HAD IN STORE

THE days went by swiftly, merrily. Dick continued to see all that was possible of Laura Bentley, without seeming to try to monopolize her time.

As for careless, good-humored, nearly heart-free Greg, that young man divided his time almost impartially among several very pretty girls. Cadet Holmes had no thought of arousing baseless hopes in any young woman's mind. He simply had not yet reached the age when he was likely to be tied closely by any girl's bright-hued ribbons.

Tom Reade and Harry Hazelton were much with the young West Pointers. Had Dave Darrin and Dan Dalzell been able to be home from Annapolis at this time, the cup of joy would have been full for all the old chums of Dick & Co. But that was not to be.

Even Reade and Hazelton were home only on limited leave, for they were still very young engineers, who could not sacrifice much time away from their work lest they lose the ground already gained.

So just after the Fourth of July, Tom and

Harry left, on a morning train, the two young West Pointers going to the station to see them off with many a handshake, many a yearning wish for the two dear old chums of former days.

"The blamed old town will seem a bit empty, won't it?" demanded Greg, as the cadet pair strolled back from the railway station.

"What'll it be in after years," sighed Dick, "with you up at some fort on the Great Lakes, say, with me in Boston, Tom and Harry somewhere out West, with Dave on the European station and Dan, perhaps, on the China station? Oh, well, chums who want to stick together through life should go in for jobs in the same factory!"

"I suppose we'll get more used to being apart, as the years roll on," muttered Greg. "But I know it would be mighty jolly, this summer, if all the fellows of Dick & Co. could be here in Gridley."

"There's Bert Dodge," whispered Prescott.

"It was hardly worth the trouble to tell me anything about him," retorted Holmes, not taking the trouble to look at their ancient enemy.

"But what a scowl the fellow is wearing," smiled Dick, half in amusement.

"Scowling is his highest pleasure in life," returned Greg.

"He looked at me," continued Dick, "as

though he had discovered some new reason for hating me."

"If he knew how little thought you gave to him he wouldn't really take the trouble to hate you. Dodge has far more reason to dislike himself. Where are you heading now?"

"Home and to the store," replied Dick. "I just saw the postman leaving. Come along."

As Dick and his chum entered, both his father and mother were behind the counter.

"Dr. Davidson and his wife are in the back room," announced Mrs. Prescott. "They would like to see you, Dick."

"Oh, your new pastor and his wife? Will you excuse me, and wait for me a few minutes, Greg?" asked Dick.

Holmes, nodding, picked up a magazine and seated himself. It was twenty minutes ere Dick came out from that back room. Then the chums started out for another stroll.

"Where are you going now?" asked Greg, suddenly, realizing that his chum was walking at an almost spurting gait.

"In looking over my mail," replied Dick grimly, "I found a letter from Lawyer Griffin."

"What does he want? You don't owe any money, here or anywhere else."

"Griffin wrote me that he wanted to see me

about a case that has been placed in his hands," replied Prescott quietly.

Greg started, then changed color.

"Dick," he demanded, "do you know what the lawyer's business is about?"

"The lawyer's letter doesn't state any more than I have told you."

"Dick, that hound Dodge must be up to some trick!"

"I imagine that's the answer," replied Cadet Prescott quietly.

"And you're going to see the lawyer?"

"Yes."

"Humph!" muttered Greg. "I know what I'd do. I'd make the lawyer come to see me."

"But I prefer going to his office."

"Right away?"

"As soon as I can get there."

"And you want me with you?"

"Most decidedly, Greg. I don't care to go into the lawyer's office without a competent witness."

"Then I'm yours, old fellow."

"I know that, Greg."

Despite himself Holmes began to feel decidedly uneasy.

"What on earth can Dodge be up to?" muttered Greg. "He threatened a libel prosecution one day last month. Can it be that he has found

people who can be bribed to perjure themselves, and that he is going to make his hint good?"

"It half looks that way," assented Dick.

"Then may a plague seize the cur!" cried Greg, vehemently. "Why, if the fellow can buy other people into making out a case of libel against you——"

"I might be convicted, and that conviction would cut short my Army career," replied Prescott as quietly as ever.

Greg stopped short in his walk, staring aghast at his chum.

"Why, can Dodge be scoundrel enough for that?" he gasped.

"The best way to judge a man, like a horse, is by the record of his past performances," responded Prescott as quietly as ever.

"So that unutterable cur, since he couldn't remain in the Army, is determined that you shan't, either! Dick, old ramrod, I'm shaking all over with indignation and contempt, and you're as cool as an old colonel going under fire again for the thousandth time!"

"If there's any real danger I guess I'd better remain cool," spoke Prescott slowly, though there was a flash of fire in his eyes.

"There's Bert Dodge again!" quivered Holmes, glancing along the street. "Hurry up! Let's meet him. Just on general principles one

of us ought to thrash him, and I most joyously volunteer."

"Don't you do anything of the sort," begged Dick quickly. "We don't want to make any matter worse. Here's the building where Griffin has his offices. Come; we'll go up and see him."

The two West Pointers were soon in the lawyer's office. Mr. Griffin was disengaged, and saw the young men at once. This attorney was rather a new-comer in Gridley. Dick and Greg met him for the first time. Prescott rather liked the man's appearance.

"Do you want the whole affair discussed before your friend, Mr. Prescott?" demanded Griffin.

"By all means, sir," Dick responded.

"Very good, then," replied the lawyer, who was still engaged in studying the faces of both cadets.

Then, while the two West Pointers sat before him, their faces impassive, Mr. Griffin continued.

"When I was retained on this case I was asked to put the whole matter before the Grand Jury at its next sitting. It is so very unusual, however, to have criminal cases against West Point men that I insisted with my clients that I would not take a decisive step, Mr. Prescott, until I had first seen you."

"Thank you, sir," nodded Cadet Prescott.

"In brief then," went on the lawyer, "Mr. Dodge and his son Bert have placed a good deal of sworn evidence in my hands, and they have instructed me, Prescott, to procure your indictment on a charge of uttering criminally libelous statements against Bert Dodge!"

CHAPTER VII

PRESCOTT LAYS A POWDER TRAIL

GREG HOLMES turned very white for an instant.

Then a flush rose to his face. He leaped to his feet, his hands clenched.

"This is an infamous, outrageous, lying——"

"Thank you, Greg," Prescott broke in coolly. "But will you let me question Mr. Griffin?"

"Yes," subsided Greg, sinking back into his chair. "I don't know that I could say any more. It would be merely a change in the words."

Cadet Prescott turned back to the lawyer.

"Mr. Griffin, will you tell me why you sent for me?"

"Because," replied the man of law, "I have some knowledge of the average West Point material. Frankly, I couldn't wholly credit this charge against you. I wanted to see you and have a talk with you, and I so informed the elder Dodge. Unless you can satisfy me that this is a ridiculous case, or a wholly malicious prosecution, then I shall feel obliged, as a lawyer, to take up the charges with the district attorney, after which we shall proceed in the usual way. But, first of all, I want to have a talk with you."

"That is very fair, sir," replied Dick.

"And I want to be fair," replied the lawyer with emphasis. "I want to make sure that I am not taking part in a case needlessly malicious, and one which, pushed to a needless conclusion, might rob the Army of a valuable future officer."

"I appreciate your courtesy and fairness, and I thank you, sir," Dick acknowledged.

"Now, Mr. Prescott, do you mind telling me, in a general way, at least, just what you have said to others about young Dodge since you have been home on your furlough?"

"I would rather, sir, tell you something else instead," replied Cadet Prescott, with the ghost of a smile. "You have some affidavits, Mr. Griffin—or, at least, you have some witnesses, and they have very likely furnished you with affidavits. The names of your witnesses, or of your most important witnesses, are Fessenden, Bettrick and Deevers. Fessenden was a bank clerk, discharged from the bank by the elder Dodge. Bettrick is a truck-driver, and Deevers is—well, I understand he has no more important occupation than lounging about drinking places."

"I am sorry that you know the names of my witnesses," replied Lawyer Griffin gravely. "I am beginning to be impressed with the idea that

you know their names so readily because you recall having said something in their presence or hearing against young Dodge."

"That is hardly likely," replied Dick, smiling coolly, "because I do not believe that I know either of the three young men by sight."

"Then why," demanded the attorney, eyeing the young West Pointer keenly, "do you know so much about their occupations or lack of occupation? And why do you know that they are all young men?"

"I will tell you," replied Dick. "In the first place, you know Dr. Carter, do you not?"

"Yes."

"He is a reputable physician, isn't he?"

"I believe Dr. Carter to be a very honorable man."

"Do you know Dr. Davidson?"

"I understand that he is one of the new pastors in town," admitted the lawyer.

"You imagine he would make a creditable witness, don't you?"

"Jurors generally accept the testimony of a clergyman at its face value," replied Attorney Griffin.

"Down in one of the tenements of Gridley," pursued Prescott, rising and leaning one elbow upon the corner of the top of the lawyer's roll-top desk, "is a young man named Peters. He is

a mill hand who has been away from his work for weeks on account of illness. Dr. Carter has been attending him, probably without charging much if any fee. Last night Peters had a small boy rush out and telephone in haste for Dr. Carter. As it happened, the physician was at his office, and answered quickly. After Dr. Carter had been in Peters's room, perhaps a minute, the physician hurried out into the street, stopping the first man whom he met. That man happened to be Dr. Davidson. The two men returned to Peters's room. Now, all three of them listened."

Lawyer Griffin was eyeing Prescott curiously.

"Yesterday afternoon," continued Dick, changing the subject with seeming abruptness, "Fessenden, Bettrick and Deevers were all here, and signed affidavits before a clerk of yours, who is a notary public."

"Proceed," requested Mr. Griffin, without either denying or admitting the truth of Dick's statement.

"Since he lost his bank position," Dick went on, "Fessenden has been compelled to live in a wretched room next to that occupied by the sick man Peters. Two nights ago, as you will remember, there was a heavy rain. Now, the roof leaked at that tenement house, and the dripping water washed away some of the plaster

covering the none-too-thick partition between the room of Fessenden and the room of Peters. So our sick man heard much of the conversation between Fessenden and the fellow's confederates. Now Peters, the physician and the clergyman are all willing to swear to the statement that Bert Dodge hired Fessenden, Bettrick and Deevers to testify against me. Young Dodge, according to the overheard conversation, met and drilled all three in their parts. That was before the three came here yesterday afternoon, with the Dodges, and supplied you with the affidavits that you now hold. For this service, Dodge is believed to have paid each young loafer the sum of twenty dollars, with a promise of eighty more apiece after they had told their tales in court. That, Mr. Griffin, is the other side of the story. Bert Dodge has deliberately hired three men to swear falsely against me."

As he finished Dick dropped carelessly back into the chair. He appeared wholly cool. Not so Greg Holmes, whose face, during this recital, had been a study. Now Greg was upon his feet in a flash.

"How long have you known this, old ramrod?" he demanded.

"Dr. Davidson told me this, in the back room at the store, just before we came here," Prescott replied.

"And you never told me—didn't even give me a hint?" cried Holmes reproachfully.

"Why, I thought I'd tell Mr. Griffin first," answered Dick.

"I have seldom heard anything that interested me more," admitted the lawyer. "Yet, why didn't you bring Dr. Davidson and Dr. Carter here with you?"

"One good reason," replied Dick bluntly, "was that I didn't know anything about you, Mr. Griffin. I am glad to say that I have found you most fair minded. But, not knowing you, I wanted to see you and judge for myself whether there was any chance that you were in league with my enemies. Had I made up my mind that you were anywhere nearly as bad as young Dodge, I would have let this matter get as far as the courts, when I would have overwhelmed you all with charges of perjury, and would have proved my charges at least against Bert Dodge and his three tools."

"Mr. Prescott, of course I don't mean to throw any doubt over the truth of what you have just told me. At the same time, as counsel for the Dodges, I shall have to satisfy myself on these particulars."

"Do you know Dr. Carter's voice well?" asked Prescott.

"Very well."

"Then kindly allow me to use your telephone."

Pulling the desk instrument toward him, and hailing central, Dick called for "33 Main."

"Hello, is Dr. Carter in," called Dick after a moment. "This is Prescott. Do you recognize my voice? Very good, sir; will you now talk with Lawyer Griffin, who is beside me, and tell him what you know of what you and Dr. Davidson heard last night in the room of one Peters? Here is Dr. Carter waiting for you, Mr. Griffin."

Lawyer and physician talked together for some minutes, the attorney's excitement increasing. Greg, in the meantime, was executing a silent jig over near the door of the room.

"Now, you can call up Dr. Davidson," suggested Cadet Prescott.

"I don't need to," replied the lawyer. "Dr. Carter has substantiated all that you told me, and has informed me that Dr. Davidson is ready to be called upon for the same information. Instead, I shall call upon some one else."

An instant later the attorney called up another number.

"Hello," he said presently. "Connect me with Mr. Dodge. Hello, is that you, Mr. Dodge? Can you reach your son readily? Oh, he is there at the bank with you, is he? This is Mr.

Griffin. I shall expect you both at my office within five minutes. Yes; about the Prescott matter. No; I can't tell you over the 'phone. Both of you come here. Good-bye!"

As though to wind up the conversation abruptly, Lawyer Griffin rang off and hung the receiver on its hook.

"Now, we'll wait and hear the other side," remarked the lawyer grimly.

"If the other side dares make its voice heard!" laughed Cadet Dick Prescott.

There being now no need of silence, Greg Holmes relieved himself of some noisy enthusiasm.

CHAPTER VIII

A FATHER'S JUST WRATH STRIKES

A VERY few minutes later a knock sounded at the door.

Then Bert Dodge entered very abruptly, his tongue starting with the turning of the knob.

"Well, have you seen that mucker Prescott?" called Bert airily. "Was he scared to——"

Here Bert caught sight of the two West Pointers and stopped short, while his father entered behind him.

"No," broke in Holmes, dryly, "Prescott wasn't even scared silly."

"Oh, you shut up, you two!" growled Bert. "Mr. Griffin, what are these pieces of airy nothing doing here?"

"That advice about preserving silence will very well apply to you, also, Mr. Bert Dodge," rejoined the lawyer. "Take a seat in the background, please. I want to talk with your father."

"What's the matter?" demanded Bert, not taking a seat, but advancing and leaning against the top of the lawyer's desk. "Has this fellow won you over with a lot of his smooth talk?

Mr. Griffin, I warned you that Prescott is a most accomplished liar."

Instead of flaring up at this insult, Dick merely turned to exchange amused smiles with Holmes.

At this moment the attorney was paying no heed to Bert, but was placing a chair courteously for the elder Dodge.

"Now, Mr. Dodge," began the lawyer, speaking rapidly and paying heed only to the father, "I am very glad that I insisted on seeing Mr. Prescott before going further in the case that you placed with me. I expected only a denial. I have, instead, been astounded. Now, listen, sir, while I tell you the all but incredible story."

Thereupon Lawyer Griffin launched into a swift narration of the story told by Dick Prescott and Dr. Carter.

As soon as Bert Dodge began to get wind of what it was all about, his face became ghastly.

"Stop right here, Griffin!" commanded Bert. "This is all a tissue of lies that have been sprung upon you."

"Silence, young man!" commanded the lawyer sternly. "This talk is between your father and myself. As for you, young man, remember to what you have sworn, and bear in mind that the upshot of it all for you may yet be a term of years in the penitentiary."

As the lawyer went on talking there could not

be a moment's suspicion that the elder Dodge had been concerned in the plot of perjury. Mr. Dodge had been guilty only of believing his son and of sharing the latter's feigned indignation.

"Now, Dr. Carter has confirmed all of this over the 'phone, and he assured me that Dr. Davidson stood ready to add his testimony," wound up Lawyer Griffin. "Mr. Dodge, what is to be done?"

"Why," stammered Bert's father, "we—we shall have to drop the whole case."

"What?" raged Bert, his face going purple with anger. "Drop the case on any such stacked-up mess of lies? Father, are you losing all the nerve you ever had?"

"Young man," broke in Lawyer Griffin severely, "you do not appear to have the slightest idea of values. I do not for a moment imagine that your father will go any further in this matter. If he does, it will be necessary for him to get another attorney."

"Why?" challenged Bert, glaring at the lawyer.

"Because the outcome of this case, if it reached court, would be your indictment for conspiracy and the subornation of perjury. The latter is one of the most heinous crimes known to the law."

"But I tell you this is all a tissue of lies trumped up against me!" stormed young Dodge.

While this conversation was going on Dick and Greg remained silent in their seats. They had no need to talk. They were enjoying it all too much just as it was going.

"Do you expect, Dodge, that a court and a jury would take your unsupported word against the testimony of two such men as Dr. Carter and the Rev. Mr. Davidson? Do you imagine, for a moment, that Fessenden and your other tools wouldn't become utterly frightened and confess to everything against you? Do you imagine that anything you could do or say would save you, Dodge, from going to the penitentiary for ten or fifteen years?"

The attorney's cool, incisive manner brought Bert Dodge to his senses.

A deathly fear assailed him. His knees began to shake.

"The case is too well fixed against me," he replied hoarsely. "Ye—es, I guess you had better drop it all."

The elder Dodge now sprang to his feet.

"Drop it, you young scoundrel?" he yelled at his son. "Why did you ever drag me into any such infamous piece of business? I went into this believing that you told me the truth."

"I—I did, sir," stammered Bert.

"Bah, you are a perjurer, you young villain!" raged his father. "Griffin, this matter cannot go a step further. You will destroy those miserable affidavits before my eyes!"

"I am sorry, Mr. Dodge," replied the lawyer, "but I am not at liberty to do that."

"You can't destroy the affidavits?" howled Bert, his voice breaking. "Why not? Aren't you our lawyer?"

"I am even more an officer of the court than I am anyone's attorney," replied Mr. Griffin gravely. "A lawyer has no right to conceal a crime when he knows one has been committed—not even to save his own clients."

"Wh—what do you propose to do, Griffin?" demanded the elder Dodge, shaking.

"Why, I hope to save your worthless son from prosecution, Mr. Dodge," returned the lawyer. "But a crime has been committed, in that your son procured others to swear to false affidavits. True, the affidavits have not yet been presented in court, and on that I base my hope that the matter will not have to go further. But I feel in honor bound to submit the facts to the district attorney, and to be governed by his instructions."

"You are going to try to send me to jail?" gasped Dodge, clutching at the ledge of a bookcase to save himself from falling.

"I am going to try to persuade the district attorney to let the matter drop," replied Griffin. "It will be the district attorney's decision that will govern the matter."

"Then what are you doing fooling around here, governor?" screamed Bert hoarsely. "Don't you see that it's your job to hurry to the district attorney as fast as you can go? Use your money, your political influence——"

In his extreme terror young Dodge seemed to forget that he was providing amusement for his enemies.

But Mr. Dodge cut in quickly. Advancing a step or two, he brought his uplifted stick down sharply, once, across his son's shoulders.

With a snarl Bert wheeled, crouching as though to spring upon his father.

Prescott and Holmes jumped up, prepared to step in. But the banker was not cowed by the evil look in his son's face.

"Begone, you young villain!" quivered the old man. "Get out of my sight. Never let me see you again. Don't dare to go to what was once your home, or I'll have you thrown out. I disown you! You are no blood of mine!"

"I guess you forget," sneered Bert cunningly, "that you are responsible for me, and that you will have to pay my bills."

"Not a penny of them," retorted the banker

sternly. "It is you who forget that you reached the age of twenty-one just three days ago. You are your own master, sir—and your own provider! Now, go—and never again let any of your family hear from the scoundrel who has disgraced us all."

Vainly Bert opened his mouth, trying to speak. The words would not come. His father again advancing threateningly, Bert edged towards the door.

"This looks like your fun, as it is your work, Dick Prescott!" snarled the wretch. "Wait! If it takes me ten years I'll make you suffer for this!"

Crash! Mr. Dodge had again raised his cane to strike the young man. But Bert had pulled open the door, closing it after him as he fled, and only the plate-glass panel stopped the fall of the cane.

"I'll pay for the damage done to your door, Griffin," promised the banker.

"Don't worry about that, sir," nodded the attorney.

"I feel that we've been here long enough, gentlemen," broke in Cadet Prescott, as he and Greg rose. "Mr. Dodge, I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am that this scene was necessary."

"I feel sure of your sympathy, Prescott, and

of yours, too, Holmes. Thank you both," replied the banker. "You are both fine, manly young fellows. I wish I had been favored with a son like either of you. Now, I have no son!"

Dick and Greg got away as unobtrusively as they could.

Bert Dodge did try to go home to see his mother, but, by his father's orders, he was put out of the house by two men servants.

Immediately after that Bert vanished from Gridley. At first he tried the effect of writing whining, penitent, begging letters home. Receiving no replies, Bert finally drifted off into the space of the wide world.

Later on in the course of these chronicles he may reappear.

Lawyer Griffin consulted with the district attorney, and it was decided not to make perjury cases out of the affair. Fessenden, Bettrick and Deevers, however, were all three warned and the district attorney filed away the lying affidavits, in case a use for them should ever come up.

By degrees the story of Bert Dodge's latest infamy leaked out. The news, however, did not come through any word spread by either of our young West Pointers.

CHAPTER IX

BACK TO THE GOOD, GRAY LIFE

A GLORIOUS summer it was for the two second classmen on furlough!

Yet, like all other things, good and otherwise, it had to come to an end.

One morning near the end of August, Dick and Greg, attended by a numerous concourse of friends, went to the railway station.

The proud parents were there, of course, and so were the parents of Dave Darrin and Dan Dalzell, the latter happy in the knowledge that their boys would soon be home for the brief September leave from the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis.

"Why, you haven't seen Dave since you youngsters all left home, have you, Dick?" asked Mr. Darrin.

"No, sir. Greg and I hoped to, this last summer, when the Army baseball nine went down to Annapolis and defeated the Navy nine," Dick replied. "But both Greg and I found ourselves so hard pressed in our academic work that we didn't dare go, but remained behind and boned hard at our studies."

"You don't forget the fact that the Army nine

did defeat the Navy nine, do you?" laughed Dan's father.

"No, sir; of course not," smiled Dick. "The Army and Navy teams exist mainly for the purpose of beating each other. I am glad to say that the Army manages to win more than its share of games."

"That's because the West Point boys average a little older than the Annapolis boys," broke in Mrs. Dalzell pleasantly, though warmly. Even she, as the mother of a midshipman, felt her share in the rivalry between the nation's two great service schools.

Laura Bentley was at the station, her mother having come with her. Dick longed for the opportunity to have a few words in private with her, but there was no chance.

"You will bring Laura and Belle up to some of the hops this winter, I hope, Mrs. Bentley," Dick begged.

"Oh, she's pledged to take us to West Point, and to Annapolis," broke in Belle Meade, smilingly. "You don't think we are going to lose the hops at either Academy while we have friends there, do you?"

"I should hope not," Dick replied earnestly.

Five minutes before train time Leonard Cameron appeared. He greeted the two cadets with great cordiality.

"I couldn't help coming to see you off, Prescott," Cameron found chance to say in an undertone. "Laura is so deeply interested in your success that I, too, am longing to hear every possible good word as to your future career. Laura couldn't be more interested in you if she were truly your sister."

That was the sting that made Dick's going away bitter. Cameron's manner was so easy and assured that Dick saw the crumbling of one of his more than half built castles in Spain.

The train carried the two cadets away. The parents of both young men had seen to it that the cadets went away in a parlor car. Dick and Greg, after leaving Gridley behind, swung their chairs around so that, while they looked out of the window, their heads were close together.

"Cameron had a nerve to show up, didn't he?" demanded Greg indignantly.

"I don't know," Dick replied very quietly. "He tried to be very kind and cordial."

"Shucks!" uttered Greg, disgustedly. "Doesn't he know that Laura Bentley is your girl, and that he's only a b. j. hanger-on there?"

"I'm afraid Laura herself doesn't know that she's my girl," sighed Dick.

Cadet Holmes swung about so that he could gaze straight into his comrade's face.

"Dick, didn't you tell her?" demanded Greg aghast.

"You have to do something more than tell a girl," smiled Prescott patiently, though wearily. "You have to ask her."

"Well, thunder and bomb-shells, didn't you?"

"I didn't, Greg."

"Oh, pardon me, old ramrod. I don't mean to pry into your affairs——"

"I know you don't."

"——but I thought you were deeply interested in Laura Bentley."

"I think I am, Greg. In fact, I'm sure I am."

"Then why——"

"Greg, I'm not yet sure of my place in life. I'm not going to ask any girl to tie her future up in my plans until I feel that I have a fair start in life."

"An Army officer's pay is enough for any sensible girl."

"I'm not an Army officer yet."

"Oh, rot! You're going to be! You're half way through West Point now. You're past the harder half, and you stand well enough in your class. You're sure to graduate and get into the Army."

"Greg, within ten days of getting back to West Point I may be injured in some cavalry,

or other drill, and become useless for life. A cadet hurt even in the line of duty gets no pension, no retired pay. If he is a wreck, he is merely shipped home for his folks to take care of him. When I graduate, and get my commission in the Army, it will be different. Then I'll have a salary guaranteed me for life; if I am injured, and become useless in the Army, I still have retired pay enough to take care of a family. If I am killed my wife could draw nearly pension enough to support her. All these things belong to the Army officer and his wife. But the cadet has nothing coming to him if he fails, for any reason, to get through."

"Well, cadets don't marry," observed Greg. "They're forbidden to. But a cadet can have things understood with his girl. Then, if he fails to make the Army, or to get something else suitable in life, he can release the girl if she wants to be released."

"But if a girl considers herself as good as engaged to a cadet she lets other good chances go by, and the cadet may never be able to make good," objected Dick.

"It's good of you to be so thoughtful for that fellow Cameron," jibed Greg.

"I'm not thoughtful for him, but for Laura," retorted Prescott staunchly.

"Confound it," growled Greg to himself, "Dick is such a stickler for the girl's rights that he's likely to break her heart. Hanged if I don't try to set Laura straight myself, when I see her! No; I won't either, though. Dick would never forgive me if I butted into his own dearest affairs."

"I know, Greg," Prescott pursued presently, "that some of the fellows do become engaged to girls while still at the Military Academy. But becoming engaged to marry a girl is a mighty serious thing."

"Then I'm in for it," muttered Holmes soberly. "I'm engaged to the third girl."

"What?" gasped his chum incredulously. "You engaged to three girls?"

"Oh, only to one at a time," Greg assured his comrade. The first two girls, each in turn, asked to be released, after we'd been engaged for a while. So, now, I'm engaged to my third girl."

Holmes spoke seriously, and with evident truth. Dick leaned back, staring curiously at his chum, though he did not ask the latest girl's name.

"At least, I was engaged, at latest accounts," Greg went on, after a few moments. "By the time I reach West Point, just as likely as not, I'll get a letter asking me to consider the matter as past history only."

"Greg, Greg!" muttered Prescott, shaking his head gravely. "I'm afraid you're not very constant."

"I?" retorted Cadet Holmes indignantly. "Dick, you're harboring the wrong idea. It's the girls who are not constant. Though they were all nice little bits of femininity," Greg added reminiscently in a tone of regret.

Late in the afternoon the chums arrived in New York. After putting up at a hotel they had time for dinner and a stroll.

"Somehow, I don't feel very sporty to-night," sighed Cadet Holmes, as they waited, at table, for the evening meal to be served. "Yet, in a week, I suppose I'll be kicking myself. For to-morrow we're due to get back into our gray habits and re-enter the military convent life up the river."

After a late supper and a short night's rest, the two young men found themselves, the morning following, on a steamboat bound up the Hudson River.

"After all these weeks of good times," muttered Greg, "it doesn't seem quite real."

"It will, in a couple of hours," predicted Prescott, smiling. "And, now that home is so far behind, I'm really delighted to think that I'll soon be back in gray old barracks, donning the same old gray uniform."

"Oh, it will be all right. There are a lot of fellows that I'm eager to see" Greg admitted.

"Is the—er—er——"

"Out with it!"

"Is Miss Number Three likely to be at the Point when we get there?"

"I don't know," Holmes admitted. "I haven't heard from her in four days. I hope she'll be there."

All in due time the two cadets worked their way forward on the boat. Now they encountered nearly a dozen other members of their class, all returning. Yet none of the dozen were among their warmest friends in class life.

"Look, fellows!" cried Dick at last. "There's just a glimpse of some of the high spots of West Point through the trees!"

It was all well enough for the cadets to claim that the life at West Point was a fearfully hard and dull grind, and that they were little better than cadet slaves. As they picked out, one after another, familiar glimpses of West Point, these young men became mostly silent, though their eyes gleamed eagerly. They loved the good old gray academy! They rejoiced to find themselves so near, and going back!

Then at last the boat touched at the pier. Some moments before the gangplank was run

aboard from the wharf everyone of the more than dozen cadets had already leaped ashore.

"Whoop!" yelled Greg, tossing his hat in the air.

"Mr. Holmes!" growled Cadet Dennison with mock severity. "Report yourself for unmilitary enthusiasm!"

"Yes, sir," responded Greg meekly, saluting his fellow classman.

"Fall in!" yelled Dennison.

"Where?" inquired Dick innocently. "In the Hudson? I decline, sir, to obey an illegal order."

Amid a good deal of laughter the returning cadets trudged across the road, over the railroad tracks and on up the steep slope that led to the administration building.

Across the inner court of the administration building walked the second classmen briskly, and on up the stairs. There was no more laughter. Even the talking was in most subdued tones, for these young men were going back to duty—military duty at that!

In one of the outer offices on the second floor the cadets left their suit cases.

Dick, being one of those in the lead, stepped into the adjutant's room, brought his heels together, and, in the position of the soldier, saluted.

The Cadets Leaped Ashore.

"Sir, I report my return to duty at the Military Academy."

"Very good, Mr. Prescott. Report to the special officer in charge at the cadet guard house, and receive your assignment to your room. The special officer in charge will give you any further immediate orders that may be necessary."

Again saluting, Prescott wheeled with military precision and left the adjutant's office. As he was going out Dick was passed by Greg coming in.

For a moment Prescott waited outside until Greg had joined him.

"It would be a howling mess if we didn't have a room together this year, old ramrod, wouldn't it?" muttered Cadet Holmes as soon as they were clear of the administration building.

"Oh, that isn't one of our likely troubles," Dick answered. "We asked for a room together, and second classmen generally have what we want in that line."

On reporting to the special officer in charge, the two chums found that they had been given quarters together. Moreover, their room was one of the best assigned to second classmen, and looked out over the plain and parade ground.

"We ought to be jolly happy in here this year, old ramrod," predicted Greg. "Especially as we haven't any fellow like Dodge in the class."

"Nor in the whole Military Academy," rejoined Prescott.

"I hope not," murmured Cadet Holmes thoughtfully.

Boys at boarding school would have needed at least the rest of the day to get themselves to rights. Trained to soldierly habits, our two cadets had quickly dropped the furlough life. Citizen clothes, in dress-suit cases, were deposited at the cadet store, and the two cadets, back in "spooniest" white duck trousers and gray fatigue blouses, were soon speeding along the roads that led across the plain to where the other three classes were having their last day of summer encampment.

"Greetings, old ramrod!" called a low but pleasant voice, as First Classman Brayton hurried up, grasping Dick's hand. Then Greg came in for a hearty shake. Brayton, who had been a cadet corporal when the two boys from Gridley were plebes, now wore the imposing chevrons of a cadet captain.

"My, but I'm glad to see you two idlers returned to a fair measure of work," laughed another voice, and Spurlock, whom Dick, as a plebe, had thrashed, pushed his right hand into the ceremonies. Spurlock, too, was a cadet captain. Other first classmen crowded in, for these

two returning furlough men were popular throughout the upper classes.

"May a wee, small voice make itself heard?"

Dick and Greg half wheeled to meet another comer. Little Briggs, a trifle less plump and correspondingly longer, stood before them, grinning almost sheepishly.

"Hullo, Briggsy!" cried Prescott, extending his hand, which the third classman took with unusual warmth.

"Being no longer a plebe, I enjoy the great pleasure of being able to address an upper classman before I'm addressed," went on Briggs.

"That's so, Briggsy," affirmed Greg.

Before going off on their furlough both had been compelled to regard Briggs as an unfortunate plebe, with whom it was desirable to have as little to do as possible. Then it had been "Mr. Briggs"; now it was "Briggsy"; that much had the round little fellow gained by stepping up from the fourth class to the third.

"Have you found any b. j. beasts among the new plebes, Briggsy?" Dick wanted to know.

"Plenty of 'em," responded Briggs with enthusiasm.

"Any that were b. j.-er than Mr. Briggs?" inquired Greg.

A shade of annoyance crossed the new yearling's face.

"I never was b. j., was I?" he murmured.

"Think!" returned Dick dryly. "However, you're Briggs, now, with all my heart—no longer 'mister.'"

"We've had a busy, busy summer," murmured Briggs, "licking the new beasts into shape."

Greg laughed heartily at memory of some of the hazing stunts through which he had once helped to rush Briggs.

Furlong, Griffin and Dobbs, of the second class, hurried over to greet Prescott and Holmes.

"Where's Anstey?" Dick inquired.

"Not back yet, I'm sure," replied Briggs.

"Oh, well, he'll be back before the day's over," Dick went on confidently. "That youth from Virginia is much too good a soldier to fail to report on time."

Soon after the instruction parties of the first, third and fourth classes came marching back into camp. It seemed, indeed, like old times, to see the fellows all rushing off to their tents to clean up and change uniforms before the dinner call sounded.

Then the call for dinner formation came. Dick and Greg fell in, in their old company, and marched away at the old, swinging soldier tread.

Most of the afternoon the returned furlough men spent in their new rooms. During that

afternoon Anstey pounced in upon them. The Virginian said little, as usual, but the length and fervor of the handclasp that he gave Dick and Greg was enough.

With evening came the color-line entertainment. Dick and Anstey walked on the outskirts of the throng of visitors.

Cadet Holmes, having discovered that the especial girl to whom he was at present betrothed was not at West Point, played the casual gallant for a fair cousin of Second Classman McDermott.

The night went out in a blaze of color, illumination and fireworks just before taps. In the morning the cadet battalion marched back into barracks, and on the morning after that the daily grind began in the grim old academic building.

Cadets Prescott and Holmes were thus fairly started on their third year at West Point. There was a tremendous grind ahead of them, but the very grind was becoming vastly easier, for two years of the hard life at West Point had taught them how to study.

CHAPTER X

THE SCHEME OF THE TURNBACK

"I MUST be getting back to my room," murmured Anstey. "I haven't had a demerit so far this year, and I don't want to begin."

"If you must go, all right," replied Dick, though he added, with undoubted heartiness:

"Whether in or out of proper hours, Anstey, your visits are always too short."

"Thank you, old man," replied the Virginian gratefully.

The time had worn along into October. During the first month of academic work, neither Dick nor Greg had stood as high in their class as they had wished. This is often the case with new second classmen, who have just returned from all the allurements and excitements of their furloughs.

"Are you studying very hard, Anstey?" asked Greg, turning around, as the Virginian entered the door.

"Not very," drawled the Virginian. "I never did like haste and rush. I'm satisfied if I get through. I did hope to stand high enough to get into the cavalry, but now I think I'm going

to be pleased if I get the doughboy's white trousers stripe."

The "doughboy" is an infantryman.

"I think I'm going to find it all easy enough, now, after I once get my gait. Thank goodness, we're past the daily math. grind."

"We'll all find plenty of math. in its application to other studies," sighed Prescott. "But what gets me is for an Army officer to have to be roundly coached in philosophy, as regards sound and light."

"And chemistry," groaned Greg, "with heat, mineralogy, geology and electricity. And how the instructors can draw out on the points that a fellow hasn't been able to get through his head!"

"Don't!" begged the Virginian. "It makes my temples throb. I've written mother, asking her to send me some headache powders. Unless our third-year science instructors let up on us, I see myself eating headache powders like candy."

As Anstey turned the knob, and started to go out, another cadet, about to enter, pushed the door open and stepped inside.

"Howdy, fellows," was the greeting of the newcomer.

"How do you do, Haynes?" asked Dick, though not over impressed by the newcomer.

Haynes was a former second classman, who, on account of illness in the latter half of his third year, had been allowed to "turn back" and join the new second class.

It often happens that a "turnback" is not extremely popular with the new class that he joins. Not less often does it happen that the turnback wonders at the comparative lack of esteem shown him. The reason, however, is very likely to be found in the fact that the turnback considers himself a mile or so above the new class members with whom circumstances have compelled him to cast his lot.

It was so in this instance. Haynes felt that he was, properly, a first classman. True, the members of the first class, which he had fallen behind, did not take that view of the case.

"You fellows busy?" asked Haynes, as he took a seat across the foot of Prescott's cot bed.

"Oh, no more busy than cadets usually are," smiled Dick pleasantly. "We are finding the new grind a hard one—that's all."

"Now, there's nothing very hard about the first half of the year in this class," replied Haynes knowingly. "I've been through it, you know."

"You're lucky," rejoined Greg. "We haven't been through it—yet."

Haynes, however, chose to regard what was meant as a slight hint.

"Don't bone too hard at this first-term stuff, fellows," he went on. "Save your energies for the second half of the academic year."

"I wonder whether we shall have any energies left by that time," replied Greg, opening one of his text-books in philosophy with a force that made the cover bang against the desk.

"Oh, go ahead and bone 'sound,' then, if you want," permitted Mr. Haynes. "I'll talk to Prescott. Old ramrod, I haven't seen you at any of the hops this year."

"Haven't had a femme to drag," replied Dick, as he picked up a sheet of notes and began to scan it.

"Why don't you turn pirate, then, as I do," yawned Haynes, "and get the fellows to write you down on the cards they're making up for their femmes?"

"I hadn't thought of that," replied Dick. "I don't believe, when I have no femme to drag to the hops, that it would make me any more popular with the fellows, either. A fellow who pirates at all should drag a spoony femme pretty often himself."

"Why," asked Haynes, opening his eyes rather wide, "are you boning bootlick with any but officers?"

"Boning bootlick" means to curry favor. Occasionally a cadet who wants cadet honors resorts to "boning bootlick" with the tactical officers stationed at the academy.

"I'm not boning bootlick with cadets or with officers either," retorted Dick rather crisply. "I've never had the delight of wearing chevrons, you know."

Haynes flushed a trifle. The year before he had worn a sergeant's chevrons. This year, for some reason, he did not have the chevrons.

"Wearing chevrons isn't the only sign of bootlick," replied Haynes.

"Is it one of them?" smiled Prescott good-humoredly.

Again Haynes flushed. He had meant to take down this new member of the second class, but found Prescott's tongue too ready.

"I don't know," replied Haynes shortly. "I've never been one of the authorities on bootlick."

"Nor I, either," laughed Prescott quietly. "So we won't be able to come to the point of any information on the subject, I'm afraid."

Greg, with his back turned to the visitor as he bent over the study desk, had been frowning for some time. Holmes wanted to study; he knew how badly he needed the time. But Haynes showed no sign of leaving the room.

Suddenly, Holmes closed his book, perhaps with a trifle more noise than was necessary.

"What you going to do, Greg?" inquired his chum, as Cadet Holmes rose stiffly, holding himself very erect in his natty gray uniform.

"I believe I'll get out for a while," replied Greg. "I—I really want to think a little while."

"Oh, I'll go, if you say so," volunteered Cadet Haynes, though without offering to rise.

"Not necessary," replied Greg briefly, and stepped over to the door, which he next closed—from the outside.

"Your roommate cocky?" asked Haynes, with a short laugh.

"Holmes?" inquired Dick. "One of the best fellows in the world."

"Guess he didn't want visitors, then," grinned Haynes. "He's a chump to bone hard all the time. Really, Prescott, you don't get any further with an excess of boning."

"I always try to get as high in my class as I can," sighed Dick. "True, that has never been extremely high yet. But a fellow wants to be well up, so he can spare a few numbers, in case anything happens, you know."

"I'd just as soon be anywhere above the three fellows at the bottom of the class," replied Haynes, stifling another yawn.

"Well, I hope you at least attain to your am-

bitions in the matter," replied Dick, regretfully eyeing two of his text-books that he wanted to dig into in turn. There was not a heap of study time left now, before the call came for supper formation.

"My ambitions run along different lines," announced Haynes.

"Along different lines than class standing?" inquired Dick.

"Yes; if you mean the kind of class standing that comes from the academic board," went on Haynes.

"Why, I didn't know there was any other kind, except standing in drill, and I believe nearly all of the men here stand well in drill."

"Oh, there are some other kinds," pursued Haynes. "Personal standing, for instance."

"Thank heaven personal standing is rather easily reached here," replied Dick. "All a fellow has to do is to be courteous and honorable, and his personal standing just about takes care of itself."

"Oh, there are some other little matters in personal standing. Take the class presidency, Prescott, for instance."

"Yes?" queried Dick. "What about it?"

"Well, you've been president of your class for two years."

"Yes; thanks to the other fellows of the class."

"Now, Prescott, do you intend to go right along keeping the presidency of the class?"

"Why, yes; if the fellows don't show me that they want a change."

"Maybe they do," murmured Haynes.

Dick wheeled and regarded the turnback rather sharply.

"You must mean something by that, Haynes. What do you mean?"

"Are you willing to resign, if the class wants someone else?"

"Of course," replied Prescott, with a snap.

"I'm glad to hear you say that," murmured Haynes.

"See here, Haynes, have you been sent here by any faction in the second class?"

"No," admitted the turnback promptly.

"Have you heard any considerable expression of opinion on the subject of a new class president being desired."

"No," admitted Haynes, coloring somewhat under the close scrutiny of his comrade in the class and the corps.

"You're speaking for yourself only?"

"That's it," assented the turnback.

"Why don't you want me for class president?"

Cadet Haynes looked a trifle disconcerted, but it was always Dick's way to go openly and directly to the point in any matter.

"Why, perhaps I don't know just how to put it," replied Haynes. "But see here, Prescott, wouldn't it be better for any class—say the second class, for instance—to have a man as president who has been longer at the Military Academy than the other members of the class?"

"Do you mean," pursued Dick relentlessly, "that you want to be elected president of the present second class, Haynes?"

"Why, I think it would be a nice little courtesy from the class," admitted the turnback. "You see, Prescott, you've held the honor now for two years."

Dick smiled, looking straight into the eyes of his visitor, but he made no other answer.

"Now, what do you think about it, Prescott?" insisted the turnback.

"I don't like to tell you, Haynes."

"But I wish you would."

"You'd be offended."

"No; I would—— See here, Prescott, you're not trying to be offensive with me, are you?"

"Certainly not."

"Oh, that's all right then. Go ahead and tell me what you think."

"I was a good deal astonished," went on Pres-

cott, "when, back in plebe days, the other fellows chose me for their president. I wasn't expecting it, and I didn't know what to make of it. But the fellows of the class gave me that great honor. I stand ready to step down from the honor at any time when the class feels that it would like another president."

"I'd like the honor, Prescott. But, of course, I didn't know that you held to it so earnestly. If you don't want to give it up, of course I'll go slow in asking you to do so. But I thought that both you and the class would appreciate having as president a man who has been longer at the Military Academy than any of the others."

"If I were to resign the presidency," replied Prescott bluntly, "I don't believe you'd stand a ghost of a show of getting it."

Cadet Haynes sprang to his feet, cheeks crimson, his eyes flashing.

"Why not?" he insisted.

"Steady, now," urged Dick. "Don't take offence where none is meant, Haynes. The class would want its president to be one who has been with the class all along, and who knows all its traditions. Now, in experience, you're a first classman, and you've all the first-class traditions. Now, if the class were dissatisfied with me, and wanted a new president, I'm pretty certain the

fellows would choose someone who had been in our class from the start. Now, with you, as a turnback——"

Haynes's flush deepened, and he took a step forward, his fists clenching.

"Prescott, do you use that word offensively?"

"No," replied Dick quietly. "Do you intend your question or manner to be offensive?"

"Not unless you're trying to start it," sniffed the other cadet.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Haynes," proposed Dick pleasantly. "I can see your point of view —from your side. I don't believe it would be the view of the class. But, if you wish, I'll call a class meeting and lay the whole proposition before them."

"You mean that you'll try out class feeling by resigning and suggesting me for your successor?" asked Haynes eagerly.

"No; I'll state the substance of our conversation this afternoon, and then you can say anything you may have to say on the subject. Then I will put it to the class whether they want me to resign so that you can be elected in my place."

Haynes turned several shades more red.

"That would make a fool of me!" flashed the turnback.

"It would be a statement of your own prop-

osition, wouldn't it?" asked Dick, with another smile.

"Stop your laughing at me, you——"

"Careful!" warned Dick, but he threw a lot of emphasis into the single word.

"Prescott," choked the turnback, "you're trying to make my idea and myself ridiculous!"

"Haven't I stated your proposition fairly?" challenged Prescott. "You think that, because you are a turnback, you have more right than I to the class presidency. If that isn't your attitude, then I shall be glad to apologize."

"Oh, pshaw, there's no use in trying to make you see the matter with my eyes," muttered Haynes in disgust.

"I'm afraid not, Haynes. If the fellows don't want me as president I would insist on resigning. But I am sure the class would rather have almost anyone than a turnback. I hope, however, there is no hard feeling?"

Prescott held out his right hand frankly.

"I hope there will be, as you say, no hard feeling," mumbled Haynes, accepting the proffered hand weakly.

Then the turnback left the room. Down the corridor, however, he strode heavily, angrily, muttering to himself:

"The conceited puppy!"

CHAPTER XI

BRAYTON MAKES A BIG APPEAL

FOR a moment or two Dick stood looking out of his window, across the far-stretching plain that included the parade ground and the athletic field.

In the near distance the football squad was finishing up its practice in the last moments of daylight. Brayton was captain of the Army eleven, and was a good deal discouraged.

"Queer idea Haynes had!" muttered Dick to himself.

Then he turned back to his desk and to the neglected chapter on "Sound" in natural philosophy.

Dick, however, was not fated to study much.

First of all, back came Greg, opening the door and looking in inquiringly.

"Haynes has gone, I see," murmured Cadet Holmes.

"Yes."

"To stay away?"

"I rather think so," nodded Cadet Prescott, without looking up from the pages of his textbook.

"Then there'll be some show for a poor, hard-

working goat," muttered Greg, closing the door behind him and falling into his chair.

"The goat," at West Point, is one who is in the lowest section or two of his class. Greg was not yet a "goat," this year, though he lived in dread of becoming one.

Hearing a yell from the plain beyond, however, Holmes went over to the window and looked out.

"Dick, old ramrod," exclaimed Cadet Holmes wistfully, "I wish we stood well enough to be out on the football grill."

"So do I," muttered Dick. "But what's the use of wishing, with the goat section overtaking us at double time?"

Greg sighed, then went back to his books.

For fifteen or twenty minutes both young men read on, trying to fasten something of natural philosophy in their minds.

Now there came a quick knock, immediately after which the door was flung open and Brayton marched in.

"See here, you coldfeet," began the captain of the Army eleven sternly, "what do you two mean by staying in here and boning dry facts?"

"Just to avoid being drowned in goat's milk," smiled Dick, turning a page and looking up.

Brayton, regardless of these heroic efforts to

study, threw one leg across the corner of the study table.

"You two fellows came out, in the first work of the squad, and did stunts that filled us all with hope," pursued Brayton severely. "Then, suddenly, you failed to show up any more. And all this, despite the fact that we have the poorest eleven the Army has shown in six years."

"Only men well up in their academic work are allowed to play on the eleven," replied Dick.

"You fellows are well enough up to make the team."

"But we're nervous about our studies," rejoined Prescott.

"Nervous about your studies!" cried Brayton sharply. "Yet not a whit anxious for the honor of the Army that you hope to serve in all your lives. Now, you fellows know, as well as any of us, that we don't much mind being walked over by a crack college eleven. But we want to beat the Navy, year in and year out. Why, fellows, this year the Navy has one of the best elevens in its history. All the signs are that the middies are going to walk roughshod over us. And yet you two fellows, whom we need, are sulking in quarters, poring over books— nervous about your studies!"

Scorn rang in Brayton's heavy tones.

"If I really thought you needed me——" began Dick.

"Of course, if you did actually need two duffers like——" broke in Cadet Holmes.

"Need you?" retorted Brayton. "I'm almost ashamed to be sitting here with two such cold-blooded duffers. But do you know why I'm here? Because Lieutenant Carney, our coach, told me to come here and actually beg you to turn out—if I had to beg. Now, am I going to be submitted to that humiliation by two fellows I've always liked and considered my friends?"

"Is the football situation as bad as that?" asked Dick seriously.

"Bad?" repeated Brayton gloomily. "Man, it's *rotten!* To-day is Thursday. Saturday we have to meet Lehigh. That's a team we can usually beat. Lieutenant Carney is so blue that I believe he'd like to compromise by giving Lehigh the game at a score of twelve to nothing! And the Navy! Think of the fun of having Annapolis strutting around with the Army scalp tied to an anchor!"

"If you really mean what you've been saying," said Dick slowly, "then we're going to turn out to-morrow afternoon. I'm taking the liberty of speaking for Greg."

"That's straight and correct," affirmed Holmes hastily.

"But I'm not sure, Brayton, that you'll find us such bang-up material as you appear to think."

"Oh, bother that!" cried the Army football captain jubilantly. "I know what Lieutenant Carney can do with you. So, for the glory of the Army, then, you'll come out, after this, and stand by us for the rest of the season?"

"For the glory of the Army, if we have anything to do with it," cried Dick heartily, "we'll 'fess' cold in every confounded study on the third-year list. For the glory of the Army we'll consent to being 'found' and kicked out of the service!"

"Hear, hear!" came rousingly from Cadet Holmes.

"Fellows—thank you!" gasped Brayton, grasping both their hands and shaking them hard. "Lieutenant Carney will be delighted. So will all the fellows. Mr. Carney has had a hard, up-hill time of it as coach this year. But now—!"

There could be no question that Brayton's joy was real. He was a keen judge of football material, and he had been deeply chagrined when Dick and Greg had withdrawn from the early training work of the squad.

"It has been fearful work trying to get the interest up this year," continued Brayton with

a reminiscent sigh. "So many good men have been dodging the squad! Even Haynes, who is the best we have at left end, ducked this afternoon. Cæsar's ghost may know what Haynes was doing with his time—I don't. But I don't believe he was boning."

Prescott smiled quietly to himself as he recalled how Cadet Haynes had been employing his leisure in this very room.

"Well, I'm happy, and Lieutenant Carney will be," muttered Brayton, turning to go. "A whole lot of us will feel easier."

"Any idea where you'll try to play us?" asked Dick, as the captain of the Army eleven rested his hand on the knob.

"Not much; we'll find out during to-morrow afternoon's practice. Be sharp on time, won't you?"

"If we're able to walk," promised Dick.

Just after Brayton had gone the orderly came through with mail.

"You got something, eh?" asked Greg.

"Yes; a letter from grand old Dave Darrin," cried Dick, as he broke the seal of the envelope.

"Let me know the news," begged Holmes.

"Whoop! Dave is on the Navy football team. So is Dan Dalzell! Both have gone in at the eleventh hour."

"Great Scott!" breathed Greg, rising to his

feet. "I wonder if we're going to be placed on the line where we'll have to bump 'em in the Army-Navy game?"

"We may be, if we get on the line," uttered Prescott, as he finished the epistle. "Here, Greg, read it for yourself. That will be quicker than waiting for me to tell you the news from our old chums."

The next afternoon both Prescott and Holmes turned out on the gridiron practice work. Both proved to be in fine form. Lieutenant Carney, the Army coach, devoted most of his attention to them.

After some preliminary work the Army eleven was lined up against a "scrub" team of cadets.

"Mr. Prescott, go to left end on the team," directed Coach Carney. "Mr. Haynes, take the right end on scrub. Mr. Holmes, you will be left tackle on the Army team for this bit of work. The captains of both teams will now line their men up. Scrub will have the ball and make the kick-off. Make all the play brisk and snappy. Work for speed and strategy, not impact."

With that, Lieutenant Carney ran over to the edge of the gridiron, leaving another officer, of the coaching force, to officiate as referee.

The ball was placed in play. At the kick-off the ball came to Greg, who passed it to Dick. The interference formed, backed by Brayton.

"Put it around their right end!" growled Brayton, the word passing swiftly to Prescott.

Haynes was darting in, blood in his eye, backed by the whole right flank of scrub.

Greg and the rest of the available interference got swiftly and squarely in the way of Haynes and the others. There was a scrimmage. Out of it, somehow—none looking on could tell just how it was done—Prescott emerged from the mix-up, darting swiftly to the left and around. He had made twenty-five yards with the ball before he was nailed and downed.

Lieutenant Carney looked, as he felt, delighted. The spectators, all of them crazy for the Army's success, broke into yells of joy. Dick had done the spectacular part of the trick, but he could not have succeeded without the swift, intelligent help that Holmes had given. Playing together, they had sprung one of the clever ruses that both had perfected back in the old Gridley days.

Haynes was furious. He was panting. There was an angry flash in his eyes as both teams lined up for the snap-back.

"That fellow has come out into the field just to spite me," snarled Haynes to himself.

At the signal, the ball was snapped back, and passed swiftly to Dick. Haynes fairly leaped into the scrimmage, as though it were deadly hand-to-hand conflict. But Dick and Greg, with

the backing of their comrades on the Army eleven, bore Haynes down to earth in the mad stampede that passed over him. Fifteen yards more were gained, and scrub's half-backs were feeling sore in body.

"That man Prescott is a wonder," muttered Lieutenant Carney to a brother officer of the Army. "Or else Holmes is. It's hard to say which of the pair is doing the trick. I think both of them are."

"How on earth, Carney, did you come to overlook that pair until now?"

"I didn't overlook them," retorted the Army coach. "I had them spotted when the training first began. But both dropped out on the claim that they feared for their standing in academy work."

"A pair like that," muttered Captain Courteney, "ought to be excused for any kind of recitations during the football season. Jove! Look at that—Prescott has made a touchdown!"

"Prescott carried the ball," amended Lieutenant Carney, "but Holmes certainly had as much to do with the touchdown as Prescott did."

"They're wonders!" cried Captain Courteney joyously. "And to think that you didn't have that pair out last year."

"Both refused even to think of going into training last year," retorted the Army coach.

"Both were keen on the bone. But, bone or no bone, we've got to have them on the eleven the rest of this season!"

By the time that the afternoon's practice was over fully fifty Army officers were on the sides, watching the work, for word had traveled by 'phone and the gathering had been a quick one.

"Prescott! Holmes!" called Brayton sharply, after the practice was over. "You'll play on the Army team to-morrow. Lieutenant Carney says so. Prescott, yours is left end; Holmesy, you'll expend your energies as left tackle. Haynes, you'll be in reserve, as a sub."

The message to Cadet Haynes was delivered without the suspicion of a snub in it. Almost any other man in the battalion would have accepted this wise decision without a murmur, delighted that the Army had found a better man.

Not so with Cadet Haynes. He turned cold all over. Not a word of reply did he offer, but turned on his heel, digging his fingernails into the palms of his hands.

"Now, what do you think of that?" demanded Haynes to himself. "Turned down for that fellow Prescott—that shifty dodger and cheap bootlick! And I shook hands with you yesterday, Prescott! I never will again! Confound you, you turned out in togs at this late hour, just to put me out of the running!"

CHAPTER XII

IN THE BATTLE AGAINST LEHIGH

BEFORE noon the next day Lehigh turned up—team, subs., howlers and all, and as many as could crowded into the conveyances that had been sent down to the railway station to meet the team and coaches.

The cadet corps, busy to a man with Saturday morning recitations, did not see the arrival of the visiting team. But the Lehighs and the afternoon's game were the only topics for talk at dinner in the cadet mess hall.

"They've sent over a race of giants," growled Brayton down the length of the table at which he sat, while a poor little plebe cadet, acting as "gunner," was serving the roast beef. "Sergeant Brinkman, of the quartermaster's detachment, told me that the weight of the team sprung the axles on two of the stoutest quartermaster wagons. Every man that Lehigh sent over weighs a good part of a ton. What do you think of that, Prescott?"

"Glad enough to hear it," smiled Dick, nodding. "I believe it's the light, lithe, spry fellows who stand the best show of getting through the enemy's line."

"If all our smaller men were like you, I'd believe it, too," muttered Brayton.

"But we haven't any more light men like you and Holmes, Prescott," broke in Spurlock from the adjoining table.

"I'm going to duck the team and quit playing," protested Dick, "if Holmesy and I are to be twitted about being wonders."

"But, honestly, Prescott," began Brayton, "you two are——"

"Average good Army men, I hope," interposed Dick. "Nothing more, I hope. At least, I speak for myself. If Holmesy wants to star——"

"I'll call you out, ramrod, if you carry the joke too far!" warned Greg.

Seeing that both of the chums were in earnest, and didn't want to hear their merits sung, the others near them desisted. But, at many a table further removed, the whole trend of prediction was that, with Prescott and Holmes now definitely on the eleven, the Army stood its first chance of defeating the Navy that year.

The Navy! It is the whole hope of West Point to send Annapolis down to defeat. The middies of the Navy, on the other hand, can smile at many and many a defeat, provided the Army trails behind the Navy at the annual football game.

As the cadets marched out of mess hall and back along the sidewalk to barracks, those who allowed their gaze to stray ever so little across the roadway in the direction of the administration building noted that the holiday crowd had already begun to gather.

There were girls down from Vassar for the afternoon, and from half a dozen choice schools along the river. There were many out-of-town visitors from every direction.

"We're going to have three or four thousand people here to see the game," murmured Greg to Dick, in the undertone that cadets know so well how to use in ranks without being detected in conversing.

"Think so?" inquired Prescott.

"I'm sure of it."

In the groups that were strolling up and down the roads leading across the plain were young ladies whom many of the cadets wanted badly to see and exchange greetings with. First of all, however, Saturday afternoon inspection had to be gone through with. From this, not even the members of the Army football squad were privileged to be absent.

When inspection was over many of the cadets hastened forth for brief converse with popular fair ones.

None of the football men, however, had time

for this. As soon as might be, they reported at the gymnasium, there to receive much counsel from coach and captain.

"Keep yourself in good shape, Haynes," called Dick, laughingly, when, after getting into togs, he met the turnback similarly attired.

"Going to funk?" asked Haynes rather disagreeably.

"Not intentionally, anyway," Dick smiled back at the "sore" one. "But I hear that we young Davids are going to be pitted against Goliaths this afternoon. It may be just my luck to go down in one of the scrimmages and get a furlough in hospital."

"I hope so!" muttered Haynes, but he said it under his breath.

Out over on the side lines officers and their families, and hordes of visitors, were filing toward the seats. Across at the east side of the gridiron, Lehigh's few hundred sympathizers were already bunched, and were making up with noise for their smallness of numbers.

Among the Army "boosters" the uniforms of the officers brightened the picture.

From time to time squads or detachments of cadets arrived and passed along to the seats reserved for them in the center.

Below the cadets, the band was stationed, and was already playing lively airs.

Out ahead of the band stood a megaphone on a tripod. This was to be used, later on, by the cheer-master, one of the cadets, who must call for the yells or the songs that were to be given.

A rousing cheer ascended from the Lehigh seats when the visiting college team trotted out on to the field. Hearty, courteous applause from the Army seats also greeted the visitors. The band played as soon as the first Lehighs were seen coming on to the field.

"Team fall in!" shouted Brayton, at last. "Substitutes to the rear. Forward!"

Out of the gym. stepped these young champions of the Army. Across the roadway they strode, then broke into a trot as they reached the edge of the field.

And now a mighty cheer arose. Yesterday, the Army's friends had feared a defeat, but now word had gone the rounds that Prescott and Holmes had made the team strong in its weakest spot, and that a cyclonic game might be looked for.

For the next few minutes the Army eleven indulged in practice plays and kicks. During this period, the cheer-master and the corps of cadets were busied with the various Army yells and songs that promised victory for the young soldiers.

Nor were the Lehigh "boosters" anything

like idle. Every time an Army cheer ceased, the Lehigh sympathizers cheered their own team.

Then game was called, with kick-off for the Army.

The ball was passed to Lehigh's right end, who, full of steam, dashed on with it.

Dick and Greg were foremost in the obstruction that met the Lehigh runner. But the Lehigh man was well supported. Through Dick, Greg and Ellerson dashed the runner, backed splendidly by his interference.

It took quarterback and one of the halfbacks of the Army to put the runner down some eight yards further on.

"Humph! I don't see that Prescott and Holmes are doing so much for us," muttered Haynes to the sub. at his right, as both watched from the side lines.

"Look at what they have to stop," returned the other cadet. "Don't be sore, Haynes; you couldn't do any better."

"Humph!" grumbled the turnback.

It soon developed, however, that Lehigh felt especially strong on its right end. Hence, much of the work seemed to devolve upon Dick and Greg. For twenty yards down into Army territory that ball was forced. Then, after a gain of only two more yards, Lehigh was forced to

surrender the ball. Army boosters stood up and cheered loudly.

"You've got a tough crowd to get by, Prescott," muttered Brayton. "But look out for signals."

As Brayton bent over to snap-back, Quarterback Boyle's cool voice sounded:

"Fourteen—eight—nine—three!"

In another instant Boyle had made a running pass with the ball to Greg, who passed it on to Dick Prescott.

Now all the Army boosters were up in their seats, eager to see how the much-lauded Prescott would serve with the pigskin.

Ball clasped, head down, Dick settled for a run, his whole gaze on the on-coming Lehigh right line.

They met in a clash. Dick had planned how to slip out of the impact, but the stronger Lehigh right end had both arms around Prescott, and down went the Army left end.

"Humph!" grunted Haynes, though his tone did not sound displeased.

"I hope that isn't a sample of Prescott's skill," muttered one Army captain to another.

"No matter how good a man he is, Prescott should have been in the squad from the outset of the training," replied the other.

Boyle was calling the signal. Breathlessly the

larger part of the spectators watched to see Dick redeem himself.

But again he failed to make much of an advance with the ball. After the second "down," with barely anything gained, Brayton ordered Boyle to throw the ball over to the right of the Army line.

So, in the next dash, Prescott and Holmes had but little to do. The Army lost the ball.

Immediately it looked as though Ennis, captain of Lehigh, had heard all about the new Army left end and left tackle, for Lehigh's own sturdy right end came forward with the ball. Dick and Greg both dashed furiously at him, but Greg was hurled aside by Lehigh's interference. Dick, however, held. Lehigh's right end dragged the Army man for a yard; then others joined in the melee, and the ball was down.

Lehigh advanced some twenty yards before being compelled to give up the ball. It became more and more plain that the visitors intended forcing the fighting around the Army's left end. At last, however, the Army balked the game, and returned to the attack, trying to regain some of the lost Army territory.

"They're going to pound us, Greg," whispered Dick in one of the pauses of the game. "We were all right in the High School days, but

we're playing with tremendously bigger men now."

Even Brayton began to question his judgment in having taken these two men so recently on the team.

"If I had been able to train them from the first, they'd have been all right," muttered the captain of the Army eleven.

To ease up on Prescott and Holmes, Brayton directed, as often as possible, charges through the center, or right-end rushes. But almost half of the time Lehigh seemed bent on bearing down the Army's left end. The hard work was beginning to tell on both Dick and Greg.

Yet it was a long time, after all, before Lehigh managed to score a touchdown. When the time came, however, the visitors also made their kick for goal, and the score was Lehigh, 6; Army, 0.

"Humph!" remarked Cadet Haynes, for the dozenth time. All his fellow subs. had moved away from him. They were disappointed, but they realized that Prescott and Holmes had entered the game under brilliant promise, yet without training.

Dutifully the cadet cheer-master kept at his work, but now the responses came with less volume from the corps of cadets, who were truly sitting on anxious seats.

In the interval of rest, Lieutenant Carney talked anxiously with Brayton.

"Have we made a mistake in Prescott and Holmes?" asked the coach.

"What do you think, sir?" asked Brayton.

"If we had had that pair in training from the outset," replied the Army officer, "I'm satisfied that they would have made a better showing. Lehigh isn't a particularly strong team, but they have one of the best right-end assaults that I've seen in some time. It's really too bad that Prescott and Holmes, in their first game, are put against such a strong, clever assault."

"Well, we can't put Haynes in now, unless Prescott should be injured," replied Brayton.

"Haynes?" repeated the Army coach. "I'm glad he's not on your line to-day. Training and all, Haynes isn't the man to match Prescott, even without training."

Haynes heard, and his face was convulsed with rage as he turned swiftly away.

"Queer how folks take so much stock in that fellow Prescott!" muttered the turnback. "Why can't a man like Lieutenant Carney see that Prescott is nothing but a dub, while Holmes is only a dub's helper?"

All through the Army seats it was beginning to be felt that the late placing of Prescott and Holmes in the Army had probably been an error.

There were even many who rated Haynes higher than he deserved to be rated, and who believed that the turnback might have done much to save the day.

As it was, the Army had about given up hope. Lehigh was stronger than usual; that was all, except that the Army team appeared to be weaker than in the year before.

The band still played at appropriate moments; the corps of cadets answered every signal for a yell, but Army spirits were drooping fast.

"Greg," muttered Dick, with a rueful face, "you can wager that we're being roasted by everyone out of earshot!"

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN THE CHEERS BROKE LOOSE

FIFTEEN minutes left to play.

By this time even the most hopeful spectators had settled down to the conviction that the Army was to lose the game. The most sanguine hoped that the score would not exceed six to nothing.

"We're done for on this trip!" muttered Lewis, the Army's right guard.

"No, we're not," retorted Dick, his eyes flashing. "We can't lose; that's all there is to it!"

"Who told you that?" demanded Lewis.

"That used to be our motto, our fighting principle on the old Gridley High School team in the days when it never lost a game," replied Prescott.

"Hm!" returned Lewis. "I wish we had some more of your old Gridley players on the team to-day, then."

Then they scurried to their places, leaving Dick in wonder as to whether Lewis' last remark had been intended for sarcasm.

"Greg," whispered Dick, his pulses throbbing, "you see those fellows on the Lehigh right flank?

They're the fellows we've got to down. We've got to down them, if we get killed!"

"That's the word!" gritted the Army left tackle. "Dick, I'd about as soon be killed as let the Army be walked over!"

This had all been whispered rapidly.

The Army had just got the ball again, and was only ten yards over into Lehigh territory.

Now Boyle's signal was sounding:

"Twelve—seven—six—three!"

Dick straightened. Greg squirmed. Both knew that their chance had come again.

Making an oblique dash, Boyle himself passed the pigskin to Dick Prescott. Then all of the Army line that could do so stiffened in and surged behind Prescott and Holmes.

Lehigh's bigger right end was making like a cyclone for Dick. The Lehigh man was backed finely.

Just as they were on the point of dashing together, Greg, as by previous arrangement, gave Dick a prodigious shove, at the same instant himself leaping forward.

So quickly was the thing done that Lehigh's right end, ere he realized it, had grappled with Greg—and Dick was around the end, racing!

With a muttered growl of rage Lehigh's man let Holmes go. For a second or two, the college men were badly rattled. Greg, with the agility

of a squirrel, ducked low and got through, racing with all his might after Prescott.

Twenty-four yards were covered ere Prescott went down. When he did so, Greg was standing back, saving himself that he might help Dick the next time.

Once more the ball was snapped back. This time some brilliant faking was done. The whole of the first movement looked as though the ball were to be pushed somewhere through the Army's right flank, and Lehigh wheeled accordingly. But it was a left-end pass, after all. Dick and Greg got through by a very slight variation on their last ruse—eighteen yards more gained!

In an instant, now, those in the Army seats were wild with enthusiasm. The band crashed out joyously, a dozen measures, while the cadets sang one of their songs of jubilant brag. Then all was suddenly still for the next bit of play.

While the men of both teams were hurrying to the line-up, a signal was noticed by hundreds that caused excited comment.

Brayton made some slight signal to Prescott. Both Dick and Greg shook their heads sullenly.

"Confound Brayton!" shivered Lieutenant Carney. "What does he mean by that? He has signaled Prescott and Holmes asking them if they can put one more by Lehigh, and they have

refused. Ennis and all the Lehighs have tumbled. Brayton——"

"Seven—two—nine—eight!" voiced Quarterback Boyle.

Instantly Coach Carney's face cleared. It was an emergency signal, not yet used in the game. As if unconsciously, all the men of the Army eleven had turned toward right guard.

The ball was snapped back. Boyle took three steps of a plunge toward right guard, then suddenly dodged, passing the ball to Greg, who swiftly passed it to Prescott—and the race was on.

Lehigh's right end made a gallant dash to stop Dick. There was a mix-up in an instant. All happened so swiftly that the spectators were not certain how the thing had been done.

But Dick Prescott, with Cadet Greg Holmes almost at his side, was charging across the lower field, past one of the halfbacks, and with only fullback really in their way.

There was a tackle. But Dick was seen to come out of it, while Greg rolled on the grass with the fullback.

"*Touchdown!*"

The air trembled with the vibration of that surging yell as Cadet Prescott raced across Lehigh's goal line

"Humph!" ejaculated Haynes. But he, too,

was on his feet, watching the lively performance.

Then the pigskin was carried back for the kick for goal, and the goal was made.

Lehigh was tied! After the early discouragements of the game that seemed luck enough.

Lieutenant Carney was the personal embodiment of joy as he recalled the signal of Brayton and the sullen headshakes of Prescott and Holmes.

"That was a ratty and clever piece of acting, to throw the visitors off their guard!" chuckled the Army coach.

No time was lost in lining up again. Only seven minutes of playing time were left. It seemed too short in which to do anything; yet in the faces of the Army players there glowed the light of determination.

Within three minutes the ball was well down in Lehigh territory. The college men fought grimly now. They were becoming rattled; the Army players seemed more confident and more full of spirit than at any time in the day.

Now there came another play. Again the Army's left wing was used. There was a short, desperate scrimmage. The Army had gained four yards, yet lost—what?

For, out of that scrimmage came Dick and Greg, each limping enough to be noticed. One

of the Army "rainmakers" (doctors) even started out from the side lines, but Brayton waved the medical officer back.

"Is it a trick, this time, or real?" wondered Coach Carney, who did not care to be caught napping again.

"Five—nine—seven—two—*eighteen!*"

The last numeral called for a fake kick. So well was the strategy carried out that Lehigh was even trapped into spreading out a trifle.

It was a left-end play again, however, and Dick and Greg, backed by all the rest, fought to put it through.

Lehigh's halfback caught Prescott this time—caught him fair and full, and Prescott went down.

Yet this had been intended. So well was it done that Greg, close in, was away with the ball by the time that Prescott touched the earth.

There was a yell of dismay from the visitors. They started to bear down Holmes, but all of the Army team had been prepared for this move from the instant the last signal had been called.

So it was the full force of the charging Army line that pushed Cadet Holmes through and over the goal line.

Over all the cheering that followed this manoeuvre came the call for time at the end of

the game's playing time. Yet, under the rules, the kick for goal was tried.

The kick failed—but who cared? The finishing score was:

Army, 11; Lehigh, 6.

Gone were all the doubts concerning Prescott and Holmes. Now they were the most sensational players in the Army team. Justly Brayton received his full share of credit, both for taking on Prescott and Holmes at the eleventh hour, and also for carrying out so cleverly his own captain's part of the strategy that had won.

Lehigh's team went off the field dejected. The visitors had counted on victory as theirs. There was a noticeable silence among the Lehigh "boosters" as they clambered down from their seats and strolled moodily away.

Only one man had any adverse comment. That man was turnback Haynes, and all he said was:

"Humph!"

CHAPTER XIV

FOR AULD LANG SYNE

AFTER that Dick and Greg turned out every day for practice with the team.

Both Lieutenant Carney and Team Captain Brayton speedily learned that they had made no mistake in getting Prescott and Holmes on to the line.

A number of smaller colleges were defeated, and with rattling good scores.

Dick and Greg seemed to improve with every game.

True, Yale walked off with the honors, though the score, ten to six, had been stubbornly contested throughout.

Harvard was played to a tie that year; Princeton was beaten by six to two, the two standing for a safety that Princeton forced the Army to make.

Lieutenant Carney was one of the happiest men on the station. From having a team rather below the average, he had produced an Army eleven that was destined to go down as famous in American military life.

As Thanksgiving drew near all interest centered in what was, after all, to be the real game

of the year—that between the Army and the Navy, which is always played the Saturday after that holiday.

Haynes, during the season's good work, had not been able wholly to keep his tongue back of his teeth. He had made several disparaging remarks. For one of these remarks Lewis, of the Army eleven, chose to take the turnback to account.

Hot words followed, ending in a fight. Haynes, roundly beaten, withdrew altogether from the eleven.

"That fellow Prescott has wonderful luck, or he'd have had his neck broken long ago, considering all the hard packs that he has bumped into in the games," growled the turnback disgustedly to himself.

In fact, Haynes was forced to do a large share of his talking with himself. He hadn't been "cut" by the other cadets, but he had succeeded in making himself generally unpopular through his too evident dislike of Prescott.

"Funny, but that's the man who wanted me to resign the class presidency so that he could run for it," laughed Dick to his chum.

Dick had told Greg of that laughable interview, but it had gone no further. Greg could be trusted not to talk too much.

"Going over to Philadelphia to see the Navy

anchored to a zero score, Haynes?'' asked Carter, of the second class.

''Yes; I reckon I'm going over,'' replied Haynes. ''But I'm not so sure that we'll see the Navy sunk,'' replied the turnback.

''I know you don't care much for Prescott,'' smiled Carter. ''Yet how can you be blind to the wonderful work that he and Holmes are doing? Is it because Prescott is playing the position for which you were cast?''

''No, it isn't,'' retorted Haynes, his face red with passion. ''If our team wants Prescott, let it have him. I don't care. But I've a notion Prescott won't be strutting about with such lordly airs——''

''Prescott? Lordly airs?'' broke in Cadet Carter, grinning broadly. ''Whew, but that would make a hit with the fellows! Why, Prescott is anything but a lordly chap. He's one of the most modest fellows in the corps. He had to be fairly dragged on to the eleven. He believed it would be better off without him.''

''So it would, sure!'' rasped the turnback.

''Now, see here, Haynes, don't get so sore as to warp your own judgment,'' expostulated Carter.

''Well, you just wait and see how much we do to the Navy! Have you heard about the Navy's new, lightning right end?''

"Darrin, you mean?"

"Yes," nodded Haynes. "A friend of mine, who saw Darrin play the other day, writes me that Darrin is an armor-clad terror on the grid-iron. If he is, he'll pulverize Prescott, unless Brayton shifts Prescott to some other position."

"Pooh! I'm not afraid," laughed Carter, turning to walk away. "Darrin, no doubt, is good, but he can't do anything to Prescott."

Neither of the speakers was aware that Dave Darrin, midshipman, United States Navy, was one of the oldest and dearest friends that Dick Prescott had.

Few at West Point knew that Darrin and Prescott had even met.

"Am I going over to Philadelphia to see the game?" muttered Haynes to himself, as he strode away from Carter. "Why, I couldn't be kept away from the game. I want to see Prescott go up against the real star Darrin, and get his neck broken!"

Anstey was one of the few at West Point who knew anything about the friendship between Prescott, Holmes, Darrin and Dalzell.

Dan Dalzell had also made the Annapolis eleven, playing right tackle. That was bound to bring him into hard grip with Greg.

"Anstey, I hope there's time for you to make the acquaintance of Dave and Dan," Dick said

earnestly while the Virginian was visiting Greg and himself. "Dave and Dan are two of the real fellows, if there are any left in the world."

"They must be, old ramrod," replied the Virginian quietly, "if they hold such place in your affections, and in old Holmesy's."

Great was the rejoicing, on the eventful morning, when the two "Army specials" pulled out from the station down by the river's edge.

The first section of the train pulled out ahead, carrying the officers of the post, their families and closest friends.

On the second longer section traveled the corps of cadets—with the exception of a few of the young men who, under discipline, were not allowed to take this trip. With the cadets went the tactical officers and the coaching force.

At Jersey City the first real stop was made. Then the journey was resumed to Philadelphia.

Franklin Field was crowded with somewhere between thirty and thirty-five thousand people when the corps of cadets, headed by the band, marched on to the field and thence to the seats reserved for the band and the corps.

The whole progress of the corps across the field was accompanied by lusty cheering, by applause and by the mad waving of the gray, black and gold Army pennants. Most of the spec-

tators who carried the Navy's blue and gold pennants so far forgot their partisanship as to cheer and wave for the Army's young men.

Hardly was the corps of cadets seated when another loud strain of joyous music was heard. The brigade of midshipmen, from Annapolis, behind the Naval Academy Band, was now entering the field. All the cheering and all the other frantic signs of approval were repeated, the corps of cadets from West Point lending heavy additional volume to the rousing send-off.

In the meantime the rival football squads had been hustled off to dressing quarters.

As the Army squad made quick time to the dressing rooms, Dick and Greg had their eyes on the alert for even the briefest glimpse of any of the Navy eleven. It was two years and a half since Dick and Greg had had even a glimpse of Dave or Dan. How the two West Pointers yearned for even an instant's look at the chums of old days!

But no such exchange of glimpses was possible at this time. The Army players and substitutes got into their togs, then waited.

"All ready?" called Brayton at last. "Then fall in and out on to the field in double time!"

Another wild outburst of cheering was let loose when the Army eleven trotted into view. The Military Academy Band began playing. An in-

stant later the Naval Academy Band fell in, playing the same air by ear.

The ball was turned loose, and after it went the players. The practice work was brisk and warm.

Hardly had the combined bands stopped playing when another great yell broke loose. Young men in the blue and gold striped stockings of the Navy were trotting on to the field. The Navy band turned itself loose, followed in an instant by the Army band.

The din was something bewildering. Those in the further seats could not hear the music of the bands at all.

Dick and Greg watched covertly as they saw the Navy team come on at the other end of the field. Which was Dave, and which was Dan? Hang it, how disguising these football suits were!

Both teams went on with their practice. There came a moment when the Army and Navy teams came closer to each other.

Then the eager spectators saw something that was not on the programme.

The chums of the old Gridley days had made each other out in the same moment. There was a rush. In mid-field Dick Prescott and Dave Darrin gripped hands as if they could never let go again. Across their outstretched arms Greg

and Dan found each other in a right-hand clasp.

So delighted were the old chums that they fairly hugged each other.

Over it all, while the spectators gazed in silent wonder, came the strains from the Army band, for the leader, more with a sense of the fitting than from any knowledge of the facts, waved his men into the strains of "Auld Lang Syne."

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot——"

The band was playing softly. As the spectators took up the fine old words the band music died down. There came a rolling rattle from the drum section of the Navy band, and then high over all the voices rose the triumphant measures of "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean."

That crowd forgot to cheer. It was a moment for song, as thousands, catching the full spirit of the air, gave voice to—

"The Army and Navy forever!"

Not a word, so far, had been spoken by any one of the chums. They had not intended to bring about a scene like this, making themselves the central figures in the great picture. But it was too late to retreat.

"It seems as though an age had gone by, Dave," spoke Cadet Prescott.

"It surely does, Dick," returned Midshipman Darrin.

"And we've got to beat you to-day, too," said Midshipman Dalzell dolefully.

"What? Beat the Army?" gasped Cadet Holmes.

"The Navy is the only crowd that can really do it," admitted Dalzell.

"Foes in sport to-day, Dave!" declared Prescott ardently. "But in nothing else, ever!"

"Never mind either the Army or the Navy, just for the minute," begged Dave Darrin. "But it's great, isn't it, just to be in the service at all?"

Then, becoming suddenly aware that they had demoralized the practice work of both elevens, cadets and midshipmen parted.

"But do your best to beat me to-day, Dave!" begged Dick.

"I surely will!" came back the retort. "And don't you falter for the Army, Dick!"

"Old friends, Prescott?" demanded Brayton as the two cadets ran back to their own forces.

"We four learned football together, on the same team," confessed Dick.

"Is that man Darrin as big a wonder as we've heard?" queried Brayton.

"Bigger, I'm afraid," returned Prescott.

"He opposes you to-day. Can he get away with you?"

"He may be able to batter me down. But I'll

give him all the trouble I can, Brayton. Darrin is for the Navy, but I'm equally for the Army!"

"It will be all right, as long as friendship doesn't break up your work," warned Brayton.

"That very friendship will make all four of us fight harder than ever we did in our lives before," spoke Prescott seriously.

At almost the very same moment Dave Darrin was saying about the same thing to the captain of the Navy team.

"Humph! Do those fellows think they're posing before a moving-picture machine?"

The one who uttered that remark was turnback Haynes. He had come on to the field with a scowling face, and the scowl was likely to deepen steadily.

Anstey, from his seat, had been "all eyes" for the pair whom he now knew to be the much-heard-about Darrin and Dalzell.

All Anstey's further speculation was cut short.

The Army and Navy elevens were lining up to start play.

CHAPTER XV

HEROES AND A SNEAK

TURNBACK Haynes watched the game closely, darkly.

He wanted to note and to remember every play near the Army's left end to-day. Should the Navy win the day's battle, then Cadet Haynes felt sure he could make a large number of men in the second class at the Military Academy believe that Prescott had allowed his ancient friendship to stand in the way of an Army victory.

"Great Cæsar, I might even succeed in getting to be president of the class yet!" muttered the turnback. "There they go again!"

A second or two later the wild cheering began again.

For the Army was charging with the ball, well down in Navy territory, and Prescott, with the pigskin safely tucked, was using his most wily tactics to get by Dave Darrin.

And Dick succeeded, too, though only for eight yards, when Dave had the satisfaction of helping to pull his old-time chum down to the ground in the interests of the Navy.

For a little while the ball had been over on

Army ground. Now, however, it was going steadily toward the Navy's goal line, and the interest of the spectators was intense.

The time of the game was more than half gone. Once the Navy had been forced to carry the pigskin behind its own line, gaining thus a fresh lease of life in the game. But, of course, that safety scored two against the Navy. For a while afterward it had looked as though that would be the score for the game—two to nothing.

"If Brayton uses Prescott just right, and doesn't call on them too often, they'll get the ball over the Navy's goal line yet," confided Lieutenant Carney to a brother officer who stood at his side.

"The Navy line-up is a great one this year," replied his comrade. "For myself I'd be satisfied to see the score end as it stands—two to nothing."

"Without a touchdown on either side?" questioned Lieutenant Carney, with a trace of scorn in his voice. "That wouldn't be real sport, old fellow!"

"I know; but it would be at least a safe finish for the Army," responded the other.

Just then Quarterback Boyle's voice was heard giving the signal:

"Eight—seventeen—four!"

Lieutenant Carney gave his friend's arm a slight nudge.

By way of Greg the ball came to Dick, who, already in fleet motion, was none the less ready for the pass.

With the ball under his arm, Prescott started. Almost in an instant Dave and Dan piled upon him, ere Greg could get in for effective interference.

Two more downs and the Navy had the ball.

Now Darrin, with Dalzell's close elbow-touch throughout, started a series of brilliant plays. To be sure, Dave didn't make all the runs, but he made the larger part of them.

Turnback Haynes's eyes began to snap.

Dave Darrin was playing with fire in his eyes.

Prescott was fighting back, doggedly, sullenly it almost seemed, but Darrin was putting on his best streak of the day. Ere the Navy was obliged to give up the ball once more it had crossed the line, and was twelve yards down in Army territory.

Nor did the Army succeed in getting the ball back over the center line. Once more the Navy took the ball and began to work wonders with it. Within fifteen yards of the Army goal line the middies carried the ball, by easy stages.

Dan Dalzell, for an instant, caught Greg's glance and sent him a look of comical warning.

Holmes stiffened, though he returned the look in all personal friendliness.

"Don't let Dave do it—whatever he'll be up to next," begged Greg, in an appealing whisper. "Dick, I'll stay beside you—to the death!"

It was another right-end pass for the Navy, backed by a solid charge.

Worse, in the impact that followed Dave succeeded, somehow, in outwitting even Prescott's stern vigilance.

Dick Prescott gave vent to a gasp. He felt his heart thumping as he wheeled, dashing after Dave.

But Darrin was in his element now, neither to be stopped, nor overtaken. Dodging with marvellous agility and craft three Army men who sought to bar his way, Dave went pantingly over the Army goal line—scoring a touchdown!

What a fearful tumult ascended from the seats of the Navy's sympathizers over on the stands!

The Navy had proved itself, by scoring the only touchdown.

Lieutenant Carney groaned inwardly. Two to five now—and the Army coach saw no more hope of scoring for this day.

Flushed, happy, the midshipmen ran back to form their line for the try for goal.

That kick missed fire. No matter! Five to two for the Navy, anyhow!

At the signal the Army and Navy lined up to fight out what was left of time to play the game.

Naval Academy band and the whole naval crowd were having the jubilation all their own way.

The midshipmen, having proved at least a slight superiority over the Army, could doubtless prevent more scoring in this game.

In fact, the Navy captain had just passed this word to the members of his team:

"Score, of course, if we can. But, above all, keep the Army from scoring!"

It was the Navy's turn to make the kick-off. This gave the Army at least the chance of starting the running with the ball.

Prescott and Holmes had shown as yet no signs of cave in.

Every player on the Navy team looked to see this swift, tricky Army pair make the first effort of the new series.

But, instead, right tackle received the ball and started with it, well backed.

He carried it ten yards, too, ere he was obliged to go to the ground with the pigskin under him.

The next play was made at the center of the Army line.

What was the matter? wondered many of the

Army watchers. Was Brayton becoming dissatisfied with his left wing?

"Humph!" muttered Haynes to the cadet nearest him. "Brayton at last knows what he's doing, I'm thinking. He isn't leaning so much on Prescott as he did."

"Saving Prescott, doubtless," replied the cadet addressed.

"Humph!" rejoined Haynes sourly.

But the third time that the ball was put in play it went swiftly to Prescott. Instead of trying to make his way around the end, Dick suddenly sped somewhat to the right. Darrin had gone in the opposite direction, yet, thoroughly familiar with his old chum's tricky ways of play, Dave had his eyes wide open. So he wheeled, rushing at Prescott. But he bumped, instead, with Greg, a fraction of a second before Dalzell could reach the spot and take a hand.

Then the whole Army line charged down on the endangered spot. Dick was through, and the Navy men were having all they could do. In a twinkling Prescott had sped, on, nor was he caught and downed until he had the ball within twelve yards of the Navy's goal line.

Right off the Army cheer-master was on the job. The corps yell was raised with Prescott's name and Holmes's.

Brayton looked flushed and happy. He hoped

yet to show these over-confident middies something.

Again the line-up was made for the snap-back. The midshipmen players were now justifiably nervous, though they gave no sign of the fact.

Again the signal was given. Holmes received the ball and started. The whole Army line veered to the left. The Navy moved to mass in support of Darrin and Dalzell.

Yet, just as the Navy men thought they could stop Greg, it turned out that Prescott carried the pigskin.

Nor did Cadet Prescott lose any time at all in trying to buck the line.

Ere the attention of the Navy had been drawn away from Holmes, Prescott was off on a slanting line around the Navy's right end.

Even Dave Darrin was properly fooled this time. Dick had only to shake off a halfback and the fullback and he was over the goal line, holding down the ball.

Never before had Franklin Field heard a greater din than now arose. The Army Band was now playing furiously, yet the musicians barely heard themselves. The black, gold and gray pennants of the Army were waving frantically over half the field. The noise of cheering must have been heard a mile away.

From the cadets themselves came some Army yell for which the cheer-master had signaled, but no one heard what it was.

The noise continued until the line-up had been effected for the kick for goal.

Brayton, flushed with delight, chose to make the kick himself. The pigskin soared, describing a beautiful curve. Between the goal posts it went, dropping back of the line.

Gloom had fallen over the middies, who realized that but three minutes' time was left.

Swiftly as could be, the line-up was made for the kick-off. It was the Army's turn to start the ball, the Navy's to come back with it, if possible, into Army territory.

The Navy soon succeeded in getting the pigskin a trifle over the middle line. But the time was too short in which to do anything decisive. The Army was strictly on the defensive, taking no chances. Time was called.

The Army had won, eight to five!

When it was all over the middies cheered the victors as lustily as anyone, though sore hearts beat under the blue uniforms of Annapolis.

West Point's cadets, on the other hand, were wild with joy.

Again and again they sent up the rousing corps yell for Prescott and Holmes, with Brayton's name added.

Turnback Haynes, finding no one to listen to him now, in anything he might have to say against Prescott, turned to stare at the heaving lines of gray.

To himself, Haynes muttered curiously:

"Humph!"

That one word did not, however, do justice to Haynes's frame of mind. He was wild with jealousy and hatred, but dared not show it.

"That fellow Prescott will have his head fearfully swelled and be more unbearable than ever!" growled Haynes to himself. "Confound him, he has no business at all in the Army! Why should he be?"

Then, after a pause, a cunning look crept slowly into the eyes of the turnback, as he throbbed under his breath:

"If I can have anything to do with it, he won't be much longer in the Army!"

For just a moment, ere the teams left the field, the old Gridley chums had a chance to rush over to each other.

"I was afraid of you, Dick," Dave confessed.

"Not more than I was of you, Dave," laughed Prescott.

"Did you find the Army such easy stuff to use as a doormat, Dan?" queried Greg dryly.

"Oh, it—it—it was the fault of the new rules," retorted Midshipman Dalzell, making a

Prescott Plunged Headlong Into the River.

wry face. "You know, Greg, you never could play much football. But the new rules favor the muff style of playing."

Only a few more words could the quartette exchange. There was time, however, for a few minutes of talk before the West Pointers were obliged to leave for their train.

"Greg," sighed Dick, "if we only had Dave and Dan playing on the same team with us, such a game would be great!"

"Oh, well," murmured Greg, "whether Annapolis or West Point lugged off the actual score, the service won, anyway. For the Army and Navy are inseparable units of the service."

It was a very orderly and dignified lot of cadets who filed aboard the cadet section of the train to leave for home. Once the train was well on its way out of Philadelphia, however, the pent-up enthusiasm of the happy sons of the Army broke loose, nor did the tactical officers with them make any effort to restrain the merry enthusiasm.

Some of the cadets went from car to car, in search of more excitement.

Dick Prescott soon became so tired of hero-worship that he slipped along through the rear car a few feet at a time until, at last, unobserved, he managed to make his way out on to the rear platform.

Unobserved, that is, by all save one. Turnback Haynes, who had been watching Dick with a sort of wild fascination, noted Dick's latest move.

The train, which had been traveling at high speed, now slowed down to some twenty-five miles an hour in order to pass over a river.

While the attention of all the rest was turned toward the front end of the car, Haynes, with lowered eyes and half-slinking manner, made his way toward the rear of the car.

Peering through the glass in the door, the turnback could make out Cadet Prescott standing outside. Dick's back was toward the door.

A diabolical light flashed in Haynes's eyes for a moment. He shook from head to foot, but, by a strong effort of will, he stayed his quivering.

One stealthy look over his shoulder Haynes took, then suddenly opened the door, stepping outside.

Cadet Prescott half turned. There was no time to do more, when he felt himself seized in a strong clutch.

There was hardly any struggle. It all seemed to be over in a second or so. Cadet Prescott plunged headlong through the darkness of the night into the dark river below!

CHAPTER XVI

ROLL-CALL GIVES THE ALARM

FOR an instant Haynes leaned far out. Now his eyes were filled with a terror that overcame the wild fascination of his wicked deed.

His anger had died down in a flash. Turnback Haynes would have given worlds to be able to recall the felonious deed he had just committed. But it was too late. He had seen Prescott's flying figure sink beneath the waters, which came up to within a few feet of the railroad trestle.

Haynes turned back with a sobbing groan. Then he cast a terrified look into the car.

"Some of the fellows must have seen both of us come out here," he quavered. "They'll see only one of us come back. I'll have to stand the whole fire of questions. Ugh! C-c-can I stand it without breaking down and giving myself away?"

The train was over and off of the bridge by now. Warned by a light burning between the rails, the engineer brought the train to a standstill.

His heart bounding with a coward's hope,

turnback Haynes leaped down to the roadbed. Breathlessly he rushed along the side of the train. He succeeded in gaining the platform of the third car ahead.

Though his knees shook under him, the turnback swung up on to the steps. In another moment, after noting that the cadets were not looking particularly towards the door, Haynes turned the knob, stepping inside and dropping, with feigned carelessness, into an empty seat.

"Hullo, Haynesy," was Lewis's easy greeting. "Been up ahead?"

"Yes," lied the turnback.

Anstey heard, though he did not pay much heed to the statement at the time.

There were many, of course, who asked for Dick. Greg had not seen his chum for some time. In his own heart Holmes felt sure that Dick, tired of being congratulated, had sought retirement—in the baggage car, probably. So Greg had little to say, and did not go in search of his chum.

It was not, in fact, until the corps reached West Point, and roll-call by companies was held, that the absence of Cadet Richard Prescott, second class, was discovered.

Then there was a good deal of curiosity—among a few comrades, wild excitement and useless speculation.

An hour later, however, Greg's fevered imaginings were cut short by word that was brought over to him from the cadet guard house.

Prescott had reported by wire. He had fallen from the rear car of the train into a river. The telegram merely stated that he had made his way to the nearest village, where a clergyman had provided him with the funds needed for his return to West Point. He would report at the earliest hour possible.

From room to room in cadet barracks flew the news.

"Now, how could a fellow be so careless as to fall off a moving train?" demanded Lewis.

"Old ramrod may have been shaken up a heap in the game," hinted Anstey. "Prescott isn't the sort of chap to tell us every time he feels a trifle dizzy or experiences a nervous twitch. He may have felt badly, may have gone out on the platform for a whiff of fresh air, and then may have felt so much worse that he fell."

"Depend upon one thing," put in Brayton decisively. "Whatever Prescott does there's some kind of good reason for."

"It's enough, for to-night," declared Greg, "to know that the royal old fellow is safe, anyway. To-morrow, we'll have the story, if there is any story worth having."

Turnback Haynes received the news with

mingled emotions. His first sensation was one of relief at knowing that he was not actually a murderer—one who had wickedly slain a fellow human being.

It was not long, though, before Haynes became seized with absolute fright over the thought that Prescott must have recognized him.

"In that case, all I can do is to stick out for absolute and repeated denial," shivered the turnback. "There's one great thing about West Point, anyway—a cadet's word simply has to be taken, unless there is the most convincing proof to the contrary. I guess Lewis will remember that I came in from the car ahead—or seemed to. But I wonder if anyone, officer or cadet, saw me running along at the side of the train?"

It was small wonder that Cadet Haynes failed to get any sleep that night. All through the long hours to reveille the cadet tossed and tumbled on his cot. Fortunately for him, his roommate was too sound a sleeper to hear the tossing.

Heavy-eyed, shuddering, Haynes rose in the morning. Through the usual routine he went, and at last marched off to section recitation, outwardly as jaunty as any other man in the corps, yet with dark dread lurking in his soul.

It was about noon when Prescott reported at

the adjutant's office, next going to the office of the commandant of cadets.

By both officers Dick was congratulated on his fortunate escape from death. Each officer asked him a few direct questions. Prescott stated that he had remained over night with the village clergyman, giving his wet, icy clothing a chance to dry.

It was when asked how he came to fall from the rear platform of the car that the cadet hesitated.

"I thought I was thrown from the platform, sir," Dick replied in each case.

"Who was on the platform with you?"

"No one, sir, an instant before."

"Did you see any one come out of the car?"

"No, sir."

"Did you recognize any assailant?"

"No-o, sir."

"Have you any good reason to suspect any particular person?"

"No *good* reason, sir."

"Could any one have come out of the car, unless it had been a tactical officer, a cadet or a railway employé?"

"No, sir."

That was as far as the questioning went, for both the adjutant and the commandant of cadets believed that Dick had been pitched from the

rear platform by some sudden movement of the car. No other belief seemed sane enough to be considered.

It was the commandant of cadets who suggested:

"If you feel the slightest need of it, Mr. Prescott, you may go at once to cadet hospital, and be examined by one of the surgeons. We don't want you coming down with illness later, on account of a neglected chill."

"I am very certain I don't need a medical officer's attention, sir," replied Cadet Prescott, with just the trace of a smile. "The Rev. Dr. Brown and his wife were about the most attentive people I ever met. I was pretty cold, sir, when I reached their house. But inside of five minutes they had me rolled up in warm blankets and were dosing me with ginger tea. Afterwards they gave me a hot supper. I slept like a top, sir, last night."

"You feel fit then, Mr. Prescott, to return to full duty?" asked the K. C.

"Wholly fit, sir."

"Very good. Then I will so mark you. Go to your quarters, Mr. Prescott, and wait until the next call, which will be the call for dinner formation."

Saluting the commandant, Prescott left the cadet guard house, hastening to his own room.

A few minutes later Cadet Holmes burst in upon his chum.

To him Dick told the whole story of his striking the water, of his swimming to shore, and of his hurried trip through the cold night to the nearest house.

"And you're sure you were pushed?" questioned Greg thoughtfully.

"Either I was pushed, or it was all a horrid dream," replied Dick fervently.

"Then why didn't you so tell the K. C.?"

"I answered the K. C. truthfully, Greg. I told him all that I really know. I didn't feel called upon, and wasn't asked, to tell him anything that I guessed."

"What is your guess?" insisted Holmes, with the privilege of a friend.

"Greg, as far as I can be sure of anything without knowing it, I am absolutely certain that a cadet came out of the car, behind me, and that he pushed me off the platform."

"A cadet?" demanded Greg, turning pale. To Holmes it seemed atrocious to couple the word "cadet" with any act of dishonor.

"Greg, as I plunged through the air, I succeeded in turning a trifle. I am convinced, in my own mind, that I saw the gray cape overcoat of a cadet. I am also certain that I got a glimpse of his face. The only limit to my certainty is

that I wouldn't want to name the man under oath."

"Who was he?" demanded Holmes.

Advancing, placing his lips against one of Greg's ears, Prescott whispered the name:

"Haynes! But you mustn't breathe this to a living soul! Remember, I wouldn't dare swear to the truth of what I've hinted to you."

Greg Holmes, wholly and utterly loyal to the cadet corps of which he was himself an honored member, went even paler. He leaned back against the wall, clenching his fists tightly.

"Haynes?" he whispered. "I don't like the fellow, and I never did. He's no friend of yours, either, Dick. But he wears the staunch old cadet uniform and has had more than three years of the West Point traditions. It seems impossible, Dick. Had anyone else but you told me this, even against Haynes, I would have turned on my heel and walked away."

"I hope it isn't true—I hope it is all a hideous nightmare, born of my dismay when I found myself going through space!" breathed Dick fervently.

"What are you going to do about this?" asked Greg huskily.

"Nothing whatever."

"You are not going to mention Haynes to anyone else?"

"No, sirree! I shall keep my eyes open a bit when Haynes is around; that is all."

"I hope it isn't true—oh, I hope it isn't true," breathed Greg fervently. "But I know you're no liar, Dick, and you're no dreamer of dreams! Confound it, I almost wish you hadn't told me this. But I asked you to."

Greg's face was a queer ashen gray in color.

At that moment the call for dinner formation sounded.

"You're all ready, Dick, so hustle along. I've clean forgotten to get myself ready. You hustle, and I'll try not to be late in the formation."

As Cadet Prescott hastened along through the lower corridor, he came face to face with the turnback.

Haynes stopped short, his jaw drooping. For just a second he stiffened his arms as though to throw himself in an attitude of defence.

Halting, without speaking or raising a hand, Dick Prescott looked squarely into the other man's eyes.

Haynes turned ghastly pale, his jaw moving nervously as though he would speak and could not.

A smile of scorn flashed into Prescott's face. Haynes fairly writhed beneath that contemptuous look. Then, still without a word or a sound, Prescott passed on.

"He did it!" muttered Dick to himself.

Yet, with the certainty of the turnback's guilt, Prescott did not wish Haynes any personal harm. The only greatly perturbed thought that ran through Dick's mind was:

"That fellow is not fit for the Army. Must he be allowed to go on and graduate?"

Thrice during the dinner period Dick allowed his glance to rove over to the turnback. Not once did he catch Haynes's eye, but that young man was making only a pretence at eating.

"If he really pushed me from the train," muttered Prescott to himself, "I hope Haynes worries about it until he fesses cold in some study and so has to leave the Military Academy. For he'll never be fit to be an officer. He couldn't command other men with justice."

CHAPTER XVII

MR. CADET SLOWPOKE

DESPITE the fact that he had been through the first half of the year before, Haynes actually did go somewhat stale in some of the studies.

Some of the cadets who lived near enough were permitted to go home at the Christmas holidays, and the turnback was among this number.

Yet Haynes came back. In the January examinations he stood badly, getting place rather near the foot of the second class. Yet he pulled through and retained his place in the corps.

Dick and Greg, who did not go home over the holidays, both did fairly well in January. Each secured a number not far above the bottom of the second third of the class.

On Washington's Birthday, the cadets had a holiday after dinner.

The day, however, was ten-fold joyous for Dick, because Mrs. Bentley, Laura and Belle Meade were expected on the afternoon of that day, the girls to attend the cadet hop at Cullum Hall in the evening.

Dick and Greg, in their spooniest uniforms, were at the railway station to meet the visitors.

"Quick!" cried Mrs. Bentley, after the greetings were over. "There's the stage, and it's about to start. We'll all get seats in it."

"If that is the programme, Mrs. Bentley," laughed Dick, "Greg and I will have to overtake you, later on, on foot. Cadets are not allowed to ride in the stage."

"Can't you telephone for a carriage, then?" inquired Mrs. Bentley.

"Certainly, and with pleasure, but cadets may not ride in a carriage, either."

"Oh, you poor cadets!" cried Mrs. Bentley. "To think of your having to climb that steep road ahead. And it's ever so long, too!"

"You get in the stage, mother, and Belle and I will walk up the road with Dick and Greg," proposed Laura Bentley.

So the two cadets busied themselves with assisting Mrs. Bentley into the stage, after which they returned to their fair friends.

"Now, I have trouble in store for you two young men," declared Belle Meade, frowning. "Why did you young men conspire to beat the Navy at football?"

"For the honor and glory of the Army," replied Dick, smiling.

"To put humiliation over your old chums, Dave and Dan," flashed Belle. "Laura and I were down at Annapolis, at a hop last month, as you may have heard. Poor Dave hasn't yet recovered from the blow of seeing the Navy lose that game to the Army!"

"But I'll wager he didn't blame us," retorted Prescott, his eyes twinkling.

"He said that, if it hadn't been for you and Greg, the Navy would have won the game," retorted Belle.

"I hope that's true," declared Dick boldly.

"Oh, you do, Mister Prescott? And why?" asked Belle.

"Because I belong to the Army, and I want always to see the Army win."

"If West Point defeats Annapolis next Thanksgiving, and if it's because of you and Greg, then I'll never speak to either of you again," asserted Belle.

"Come along, Dick," laughed Laura. "Belle's positively dangerous when she talks about the Navy!"

"The Navy is the only real branch of the service," declared Belle, with a toss of her head. "Everybody says so. The Army is merely nothing—positive *zero!*"

Laughing good-humoredly, Greg piloted Belle up the long, winding walk that leads to the

West Point plain. Dick and Laura soon fell in behind, at some distance, walking very slowly.

"Did you have a tiresome trip here?" inquired Dick.

"No; a very pleasant one," Laura replied.

"I should think a long journey would be tedious to women traveling without male escort," Dick went on.

"We had escort as far as New York," Laura replied promptly.

"Oh, you did?" inquired Prescott, feeling a swift sinking at heart.

"Yes; Mr. Cameron had to make a flying trip to New York. He had to come at about this time, so he put it off for three or four days in order to travel through with us. Wasn't that nice of him?"

"Extremely nice of him," admitted the cadet rather huskily. "I—I suppose he will return with you from New York."

"We expect him to," Laura admitted. "But what a great game that must have been, Dick! How I wish Belle and I had gone over to Philadelphia to see it."

"It was an exciting game, and a hard-fought one."

Laura chatted on gayly, and at the same time displayed much enthusiasm over the life at West Point. Yet Dick, though he strove to conceal

the fact, was low spirited over the attentions of Mr. Cameron.

The two cadets had permission to visit at the hotel, so went into the parlor until the girls joined them there. Later, as there was no snow on the ground, a stroll about the post was proposed and enjoyed.

Dick made out Laura's card for the dance that night, while Greg attended to Belle's. Many were the cadets who glared at Dick and Greg for not having inscribed their names on the dance cards of these two very "spoony femmes." (Pretty girls.)

After one of her dances with Dick, Belle asked him to lead her out into the corridor, where the air was cooler.

"Shall I go after your wrap?" asked Dick solicitously.

"Goodness, no," replied Belle. "I'm not as sensitive as that."

Then, abruptly changing the subject, Miss Meade asked:

"What do you think of Mr. Cameron?"

"I saw very little of him," Dick replied.

"But what do you think of him?" Belle insisted.

"I think that, if he is Laura's friend, he must be a fine fellow," Dick replied with enthusiasm.

A slight shudder of disappointment passed over Belle.

"Are you beginning to feel chilly, Belle?" asked Dick anxiously.

"If I am, it's nervously, not because I am really cold," replied Miss Meade dryly.

"Why did you ask me what I think of Mr. Cameron?"

"Because I am interested in knowing," Belle answered. "Mr. Cameron is with Laura a great deal these times."

"Is he?" asked Dick, with another sinking at the heart.

"Oh, yes," Belle replied. "Some folks in Gridley are nodding their heads wisely, and pretending they can guess what is going to happen before long. But I'm very certain that there is nothing quite definite as yet. Indeed, I'm not quite sure that Laura really knows her own mind as yet."

Soon after that, Miss Meade requested to be conducted back into the ballroom, to find Greg, who was to be her next partner.

"Now, good gracious, I hope I've really given Cadet Slowpoke a broad enough hint," thought Belle. "If he doesn't go ahead and speak to Laura now, it'll be because he doesn't care. And Leonard Cameron isn't a bad fellow, even if he does prefer the yardstick to a sword!"

As for Dick, his evening was spoiled. His sense of honor prevented his "speaking" to Laura until he felt that his future in the Army was assured.

Yet spoiled as his evening was, Prescott did his best to make it a bright occasion for Laura Bentley.

The next morning, while the members of the cadet corps were grinding at recitations, or boning over study desks in barracks, Mrs. Bentley and the girls rode down the slope in the stage and boarded a train for New York.

Dick had not "spoken."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ENEMIES HAVE AN UNDERSTANDING

AFTER that February hop, Cadet Prescott appeared to give himself over to one dominating ambition.

That ambition was to secure higher standing in his class.

He became a "bone," and tried so hard to delight his instructors that he was suspected of boning bootlick with the Academic Board.

For Prescott had dropped Laura out of his mind.

That is to say, he had tried to do it, and Prescott was a young man with a strong will.

Belle's words, instead of spurring him on to do something that his own peculiar sense of honor forbade, had killed his vague dream.

After all, Dick reasoned, it was Laura's own good and greatest happiness that must be considered.

Leonard Cameron, a rising and prosperous young merchant in Gridley, would doubtless be able to give Laura a much better place in the world.

In the matter of income, Cameron doubtless enjoyed three or four times as much as the an-

nual pay of a second lieutenant ($1,700) amounts to. Besides, Cameron was not much in the way of risking his life, while an Army officer may be killed at any time, even in an ordinary riot. A lieutenant's widow received only her pension of a comparatively few dollars a month.

"It would have been almost criminal for me to have thought of tying Laura's future up to mine," Dick told himself savagely, as he took a lonely stroll one March afternoon. "I'll have nothing but my pay, if I do graduate. A fellow like Cameron can allow his wife more for pin money than my whole year's pay will come to. Really, I've no right to marry any but a rich girl, who has her own income. And, even if I fell in love with a rich girl, I wouldn't have the nerve to propose to her. I'd feel like a cheap fortune hunter."

Having made up his mind to put Laura Bentley out of his inner thoughts, Prescott did not write her as often as formerly.

He wrote often enough, and pleasantly enough to preserve the courtesies of life. Yet keen-witted Belle Meade was not long in discovering, from what Laura thought were chance remarks, that Dick was "dropping away" as a correspondent.

So, too, Laura's letters were fewer and briefer.

"Dick didn't really care for her, I guess,"

Belle decided, almost vengefully. "Then the bigger idiot he is, for there aren't many girls like Laura born in any one century! But Dick sees a good many girls at West Point, and perhaps he has grown indifferent to his old friends. There are a good many very 'swell' girls who visit West Point, too. Horrors! I wonder if Dick and Greg think that we are too countrified?"

After the first few weeks, with his resolute nature triumphing over anything that he set his mind to, Prescott found himself thinking less about Cameron. It was practically a settled matter, anyway, between Laura and Cameron, so Dick thought, and Cadet Prescott had his greatly improved standing in his class to console him for any losses in other directions. Yet Dick would not have dared to confess, even to himself, how little class standing did console him.

So hard had been study in the last few weeks that Prescott had all but forgotten the existence of turnback Haynes. They were not in the same section in any of the studies, nor did the two mingle at all in barracks life. Neither went to the hops now, either.

"Is Prescott afraid of me—or what?" wondered Haynes. "Perhaps he hopes I have forgotten him, but I haven't. One thing is clear—he doesn't intend to do anything about that train

incident, or he'd have done it long ago. If he thinks I have forgotten my dislike of him, he may be glad enough to have it just that way. Bah, as if I could ever get over my dislike for a bootlick like Prescott! I'd like to get him out of the Army for good! I wonder if I can't, between now and June? I'd like my future in the Army a whole lot better with Prescott out of it."

So Haynes began taking to moody, lonely walks when he had any time for such outlet to his evil feelings.

It is one of the strangest freaks of queer human nature that one who has once done another an injury ever after hates the injured one with an added intensity of hatred.

Turnback Haynes was quite able to convince himself that Dick Prescott, who avoided him, was really his worst enemy in the world.

So, one Saturday afternoon, in early April, it chanced that Dick and Cadet Haynes took to the same stretch of less-traveled road over beyond engineers' quarters.

Suddenly, going in opposite directions, they met face to face at a sharp bend in the road.

"Oh, you?" remarked Haynes, in a harsh, sneering voice.

Prescott barely nodded coldly, and would have passed on, but Haynes stepped fairly in his path.

"Prescott," cried the turnback, "I don't like you!"

"Then we are about even in our estimate of each other," responded Dick indifferently.

"Were you following me up, just now?"

"Why, as I have a memory, I might more properly suppose that you had been prowling on my trail," retorted Dick, eyeing his enemy sternly.

"Humph! What do you mean by that?" demanded Haynes bristling.

"Do you deny, Haynes, that on the night when we were returning from the Army-Navy game you pushed me from the rear platform of the train?"

Cadet Prescott spoke without visible excitement, but gazed deeply into the shifty, angry eyes of the other.

Haynes swallowed hard. Then he replied gruffly:

"No; I don't deny it."

"Why did you do that, Haynes?"

"I haven't admitted that I did do it."

"You know that you did, though."

"Humph!"

"Why did you do it?"

"I'll tell you, then," hissed the turnback. "It was because neither West Point nor the Army is going to be big enough for both of us!"

"When do you intend to resign?" demanded Prescott coolly.

"Re——" gasped Haynes. "Resign? I?"

"Then you imagine that I am going to quit, or that you're going to force me to do so?" retorted Prescott. "Haynes, even up to this hour I have hesitated to believe the half evidence of my own eyes. I have tried to convince myself that no man who wears the honored gray of West Point could do such a dastardly piece of work. And you have as good as admitted it to me."

"Well," sneered the turnback, "what do you think you're going to do about it?"

"If I knew," glared Dick, "I wouldn't tell you until the time came."

"It will never come," laughed Haynes harshly. "That is, your time of triumph over me will never come. What else may happen it is yet a little too early to say."

Cadet Prescott felt all the cold rage that was possible to him surging up inside.

"Haynes," he went on, "it may seem odd of me to ask a favor from you."

"Very odd, indeed!" sneered the turnback.

"It is a very slight favor," continued Prescott, "and it is this: Don't at any time venture to address me, except upon official business."

With that Prescott stepped resolutely around

the cadet in his path, and went forward at a stiff stride.

Haynes remained for some moments where he was, gazing after Dick with a curious, leering look.

"Prescott is a coward—that's what he is!" muttered the turnback. "If he weren't, I said enough to him just now to cause him to leap at my throat. Humph! Anyone can beat a coward, and without credit. Prescott, your days at the Military Academy are numbered! You, an Army officer? Humph!"

Though it would be hard to understand why, Haynes felt much better after that brief interview. Perhaps it was because, all along, he had feared Cadet Prescott. Now the turnback no longer feared his enemy in the corps.

How would the feud end? How could it end?

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRAITOR OF THE RIDING HALL

IF Dick gave no further outward attention to Haynes, he was nevertheless bothered about the fellow.

"Haynes isn't fit to go through and become an officer; to be set up over other men," Prescott told himself often.

This slighting opinion was not on account of the personal dislike that Prescott felt for the turnback. There were other cadets at West Point whom Dick did not exactly like, yet he respected the others, for they themselves respected the traditions of honor and justice that are a part of West Point.

With Haynes the trouble was that he was certain, sooner or later, to prove a discredit to the best traditions of the Army. Such a fellow was likely to prove a bully over enlisted men. Now, the enlisted men of the Regular Army do not resent having a strict officer set above them, but the officer must be a man whom they can respect. Such an officer, who commands the respect and admiration of the enlisted men under him, can lead them into the most dangerous places. They will follow as a matter of course;

but an unworthy officer, one whom the enlisted men know to be unfit to command them, will demoralize a company, a troop, a battery or a regiment if he be given power enough.

Every cadet and every officer of the Army is concerned with the honor of that Army. If he knows that an unworthy man is obtaining command, it worries the cadet or officer of honor.

Had he been able to offer legal, convincing proof of Haynes's dastardly conduct in pushing him off the train on the return from the Army-Navy game, Prescott would have submitted that proof to the authorities, or else to the members of the second class in class meeting.

"But Haynes would only lie out of it, of course," Dick concluded. "As a cadet, his word would have to be accepted as being as good as mine. So nothing would come of the charges."

A class meeting, unlike a court-martial, might not stand out for legal evidence, if the moral presumption of guilt were strong enough; but Cadet Prescott would not dream of invoking class action unless he had the most convincing proof to offer.

Class action, when it is invoked at West Point, is often more effective than even the work of a court-martial. If the class calls upon a member to resign and return to civil life, he might as well do so without delay. If he does not, he

will be "sent to Coventry" by every other cadet in the corps. If he has the nerve to disregard this, and graduate, he will go forth into the Army only to meet a like fate at the hands of every officer in the service. He will always be "cut" as long as he attempts to wear the uniform.

"It's a shame to let this fellow Haynes stay in the service," Dick muttered. "And yet my hands are tied. Wth my lack of evidence I can't drag him before either a legal or an informal court. The only thing I can do is to let matters go on, trusting to the fact that, sooner or later, Haynes will overstep the bounds less cautiously, and that he'll find himself driven out of the uniform."

On going to his quarters for a study period one afternoon further along in April, Haynes found himself unable to concentrate his mind on the lesson before him. He was alone, his roommate being absent with a section at recitation.

As he sat thus idle at the study table, Haynes toyed with a little black pin. How the pin had come into his possession he did not even recall. It was a pin of ordinary size, one of the kind much used by milliners.

Having nothing else to do, Haynes idly thrust the head of the pin repeatedly in under the sole

at the toe of his right boot. Somewhat to his surprise the head went well in, then stopped at last, fitting snugly and stiffly in place.

"If I had a fellow sitting in front of me, what a startling jab I could give him with the toe of my boot," grinned the turnback.

Then, suddenly, there came a very queer look into his face.

"Why, I reckon I could jab something else with a pin, beside the flesh of another cadet," he muttered.

Then, trembling slightly, the turnback bent down and carefully extracted the pin. His next act was to fasten it very securely on the inside of the front of his fatigue blouse, where the black uniform braid prevented its being seen.

Of late the second class cavalry drills had been in the open. That day, however, it was raining heavily, and the order had been passed for the squads to report at the riding hall.

Soon after Haynes's roommate had returned from recitation the signal sounded for the squad that was to report at the riding hall.

Haynes rose, drawing on his uniform raincoat.

"What's the matter with you, Haynesy?" inquired his roommate.

"Why do you ask, Pierson?"

"There was a very queer look on your face,"

replied Cadet Pierson. "I couldn't tell whether it were a diabolical look or merely a sardonic grin."

"I was just thinking of a story I heard told years ago," lied Haynes glibly.

"I don't believe I'd care to hear that story, then," returned Pierson dryly.

"I'm not going to tell it to you. 'Bye, old man. I'm off for riding drill."

Dick and Greg were in the same squad. Those who were going for drill at this hour fell in at the command of their squad marcher, and strode away to the riding hall.

Once inside, the cadets disposed of their uniform raincoats. The squad marcher reported to Captain Albutt, who was their instructor for the afternoon.

"To horse!" came the crisp order.

Each cadet stepped to his mount, untying the animal and standing by.

Haynes's heart gave a quick jump when he saw that to Dick's lot had fallen Satan, a fiery black, the worst tempered and most treacherous horse in the lot.

"My chance is coming sooner than I had thought for," quivered the turnback.

Dropping his handkerchief, Haynes bent over and quickly slipped the black pin in at the toe of his right boot.

"When we get into column of fours I have Prescott on my right," muttered the turnback. He had straightened up again, in almost no time, tucking the handkerchief again inside his blouse. His act had attracted no attention.

"Prepare to mount!" rang Captain Albutt's voice.

Each cadet took hold of mane, bridle and saddle in the way prescribed and stood with left foot in stirrup.

"Mount!"

Jauntily each man swung up, passing his right leg over his mount's back, then settling easily into saddle.

For the first few minutes the squad walked, trotted, cantered and galloped around the tanbark in single file. Then their instructor, riding always near the center of the floor, threw them into platoon front at the west end of the hall. Now he gave them some general instruction as to the nature of the evolutions they were to perform. The next command came by bugle, and the platoon broke into column of fours, moving forward at the trot, Captain Albutt riding at the left flank near the head of the column.

As the horses fell into column of fours Haynes saw his chance. Nearly always, in this formation, some of the horses bump their neighbors. Haynes, by a slight twist of the bridle, threw

his horse over against Prescott's. The thing was so natural as to attract no notice.

Just as the horses touched flanks, however, Haynes, with his right foot swiftly withdrawn from its stirrup-box, gave Satan a vicious jab with the pin-point protruding from the toe of his boot.

There was a wild snort. Satan seemed instantly bent on proving the appropriateness of his name.

Lowering his head, Satan kicked out viciously with his hind feet, throwing the horses just behind into confusion.

Almost in the same instant Satan bit the rump of a horse in front of him.

Then up reared Prescott's mount.

Dick was a good horseman, but this move had caught him unawares. A horse at a trot is not usually hard to manage, and Prescott had not been on his guard against any such trick.

By the time that Satan came down from his plunge Dick had a firm seat and a strong hand on the bridle. But Satan was a tough-mouthed animal. His unlooked-for antics had caused the horses just ahead to swerve.

Through the scattering four in front plunged Satan, fire in his eyes, his nostrils quivering.

Captain Albutt took the situation in at once.

"Squad halt!" he roared. "Be cool, Mr.

Prescott! Bring your mount down with tact, not brute force."

Satan, having taken the bit between his teeth, went tearing around the tan-bark, not in the least minding the tight hold that his rider had on the bridle, or the way that the bit cut into his mouth. Satan blamed his own rider for that sharp, stinging jab, and he meant to unseat that rider.

Dick kept perfectly cool, though he realized much of his own great peril with this infuriated beast.

Captain Albutt, watching closely, became anxious when he saw that the cadet was failing in bringing down the temper of the infuriated beast.

Satan was more than furious; he was crafty. Master of many tricks, and with a record for injuring many a rider in the past, the animal dashed about the tan-bark, seeking some way of throwing his rider.

His uneasiness increasing, Captain Albutt put spurs to his own mount and went after Satan.

"Steady, Mr. Prescott," admonished the cavalry officer, riding close. "I'll soon have a hand on your bridle, too."

Yet every time that Captain Albutt rode close, Satan waited until just the right instant, then

swerved violently, snatching his head away from the risk of capture.

So villainous were these swerves that Dick had several narrow escapes from being unhorsed. A man of less skill would have been.

At first the other members of the squad looked on only with amused interest. When, however, they caught the grave look on the captain's face, they began to comprehend how serious the situation was.

Satan, finding other devices for throwing his rider to be useless, soon resorted to the most wicked trick known to the equine mind. He reared, intent on throwing himself over backward, crushing his rider beneath him.

Captain Albutt reached the spot at a gallop, just in the nick of time. Standing in his stirrups, he caught one side of the bridle just in time to pull the horse's head down.

But, foiled in this attempt, Satan allowed his front feet to come down. Close to the ground the brute lowered its head, kicking up high with his hind heels. This, accompanied by a "worming" motion, sent Prescott flying from his saddle.

He made an unavoidable plunge over the animal's head.

"Let go your bridle!" roared Captain Albutt.

In the same instant the cavalry officer leaped from his own saddle.

Over came Cadet Prescott, turning a somersault in the air.

Albutt had jumped in order to catch the cadet. It all happened so quickly, however, that the cavalry officer had chance only to catch the cadet's shoulders. Had it not been for that, Prescott would have struck fully on his back.

Having thrown its rider, Satan cantered off to the far end of the riding hall, where he stood, snorting defiance.

Captain Albutt allowed Prescott's head and shoulders to sink easily to the tan-bark.

"Are you badly hurt, Mr. Prescott?" inquired the officer.

"The small of my back is paining me just a little sir, from the wrench," replied Prescott coolly. "If it hadn't been for you, sir, my neck would have been broken."

"I think it would," replied the cavalry officer, smiling. "But this is one of the things I am here for. Do you feel as if you could rise, Mr. Prescott, with my help?"

"I'd like to try, sir."

Dick did try, but watchful Captain Albutt soon let him down again.

"You may not be much hurt, Mr. Prescott, but I want one of the medical officers to take

Capt. Albutt Caught Prescott by the Shoulders.

the responsibility for saying so. Just lie where you are until we get a medical officer here. Mr. Haynes, pass your lines to the man at your left and run to the telephone. Ask for a medical officer and two hospital corps men with a stretcher."

The turnback leaped quickly to obey. This gave him the coveted chance to get away by himself, where he could secretly remove from his boot the little black pin that had been responsible for this excitement.

Surgeon and hospital men came on the run. The surgeon declined to make an examination there, but directed his men to lift the injured cadet to the stretcher and take him to the hospital.

In the meantime some enlisted men had caught and quieted Satan, leading him from the tanbark.

"That brute never will be used again, if I have my way," muttered Captain Albutt, loudly enough to be heard by most of the cadets of the squad.

Then the drill proceeded as though nothing had happened.

"I fixed my man that time, and easily enough," growled Haynes to himself. "He's out of the service, from now on. He can nurse a weak back the rest of his days."

When the drill was dismissed a party of three ladies, who had seen the whole scene from one of the iron balconies, came down to meet the cavalry officer.

"Your conduct was just splendid, captain," cried one of the women, her face glowing. "But I feared you would be killed, or at least badly hurt, when you put yourself in the way of that somersaulting cadet. Why did you take such chances?"

"In the first place," replied the cavalry officer quietly, "because it was simple duty. There was another reason. If I am hurt, in the line of duty, I have my retired pay, as an officer, to live on. But a cadet who is hurt so badly that he cannot remain in the service has to go home, perhaps hopelessly crippled for life—and a cadet injured in the line of duty has no retired pay."

"Why is that?" asked another of the ladies.

"I do not know," replied Captain Albutt simply, "unless it is because Congress has always been too busy to think of the simple act of justice of providing proper retired pay for a cadet who is injured for life."

"Has Mr. Prescott been injured so that he'll have to leave the Army?"

"I don't know. But, if you'll excuse me, ladies, I am going over to the hospital now and find out."

CHAPTER XX

IN CADET HOSPITAL

CADET PRESCOTT lay on one of the operating tables at cadet hospital.

Without a murmur he submitted to the examination. At times the work of the medical officers hurt a good deal, but this was evidenced only by a firmer pressing together of the young soldier's lips.

At last they paused.

"Are you through, gentlemen?" Dick asked, looking steadily at the two medical officers.

"Yes," answered Captain Goodwin, the senior surgeon.

"May I properly ask what you find?"

"We are not yet quite sure," replied the senior surgeon. "None of the bones of the spine are broken. There has, of course, been a severe wrenching there. Whether your injury is going to continue into a serious or permanent injury we cannot yet say. A good deal will depend upon the grit with which you face things."

"I am a soldier," replied Dick doggedly. "Even if I am not much longer to be one."

"We will now have you removed to your cot. We are not going to place you in a cast as yet,

anyway. It is possible that, after a few days, you may be able to walk fairly well."

"In that case, captain, is it then likely that I shall be able to return to duty?"

"Yes; the quicker things mend, and the sooner you are able to walk without help, the greater will be your chance of pulling through this injury and remaining in the service."

"Then I'd like to try walking back to barracks right now," smiled Cadet Prescott, wistfully.

"You are not to think of it, Mr. Prescott! You must not even attempt to put a foot out of bed until we give you permission. If you take the slightest risk of further injury to your back you are likely to settle your case for good and all, so far as the Army is concerned."

"I told you I was a soldier, sir," Dick replied promptly. "For that reason I shall obey orders."

"Good! That's the way to talk, Mr. Prescott," replied the senior medical officer heartily. "The better soldier you are, the better your chances are of remaining in the Army."

"There won't be any need, will there, captain, to send word to my father and mother of this accident until it is better known how serious it is?" coaxed Dick.

"If you wish the news withheld for the pres-

ent, I will direct the adjutant to respect your wishes."

"If you will be so good, sir," begged the hapless cadet.

Hospital men were summoned and Dick was skillfully, tenderly transferred to a cot in another room. The steward stood by and took his orders silently from Captain Goodwin.

Hardly had this much been accomplished when a hospital service man entered, passing a card to Captain Goodwin.

"Admit him," nodded the surgeon.

In another minute Captain Albutt stepped into the room, going over to the cot and resting one of his hands over the cadet's right hand.

"How are you feeling?" asked Captain Albutt.

"Fine, sir, thank you," replied Dick cheerily.

"I'm glad your pluck is up. And I hear that you have a good chance."

"I hope so, sir, with all my heart. The Army means everything in life to me, sir. And Captain Albutt, I want to thank you for your splendid conduct in risking your own life to save me."

"Surely, Prescott," replied the captain quietly, "you know the spirit of the service better than to thank a soldier for doing his duty."

Captain Albutt had called him simply "Prescott," dropping the "mister," which officers are

usually so careful to prefix to a cadet's name when addressing him. This little circumstance, slight as it was, cheered the cadet's heart. It was a tactful way of dropping all difference in rank, and of admitting Prescott to full-fledged fraternity in the Army.

"I shall inquire after you every day, Prescott, and be delighted when you can be admitted to the riding work again," said the captain in leaving. "And I think you need have no fear of seeing Satan on the tan-bark again. If I have any influence, that beast will never be assigned to a cadet's use after this."

When Captain Albutt had gone Greg came in, on tiptoe.

"Cut out the soft pedal, old chap," smiled Dick cheerily, as their hands met. "I'm not a badly hurt man. The worst of this is that it keeps me from recitations for a few days. If it weren't for that, I'd enjoy lying here at my ease, with no need to bother about reveille or taps."

Greg's manner was light-hearted and easy. He had come to cheer up his chum, but found there was no need for it.

Then the superintendent's adjutant dropped in on his way home from the day in the office at headquarters. Having talked with Captain Goodwin, the adjutant agreed that there was

no need, for a few days, to notify Prescott's parents and cause them uneasiness.

"We'll hope, Mr. Prescott," smiled the adjutant, "that you'll be well able to sit up and send them the first word of the affair in your own hand, coupled with the information that you're out of all danger."

Had it not been for his natural courage, Cadet Prescott would have been a very restless and "blue" young man. He knew, as well as did anyone else, that the chances of his complete recovery to sound enough condition for future Army service were wholly in the balance. But Captain Goodwin had impressed upon him that good spirits would have a lot to do with his chances. So strong was his will that Prescott was actually almost light-hearted when it came around time to eat his evening meal of "thin slops."

Over in cadet barracks interest ran at full height. Greg had to receive scores of cadets who dropped in to inquire for the best word.

One of the last of these to come was Cadet Haynes.

Greg received him rather frigidly, though with no open breach of courtesy.

"It's too bad," began Haynes.

"Of course it is," nodded Holmes.

"Prescott has very little chance of remaining in the corps, I suppose?"

"The surgeons don't quite say that," rejoined Greg.

"Oh, the rainmakers (doctors) are always cagey about giving real information until a man's dead," declared the turnback sagely.

"They seem to believe that Prescott has an excellent chance," insisted Greg.

"No bones broken?"

"Not a one."

"What is the trouble, then?"

"The rainmakers can't say exactly. They're waiting and watching."

"Humph! That sounds pretty bad for their patient."

"They say that if Prescott is able to walk soon, then his return to duty ought to be rather speedy."

"I'd like to believe the rainmakers," grunted Haynes.

"Would you?" inquired Greg very coolly.

"Of course."

"What is your particular interest in my roommate?" demanded Cadet Holmes.

He looked straight into the other's eyes.

"Why, Prescott is one of the best and most popular fellows in the class. I've always liked him immensely, and——"

"Humph!" broke in Cadet Holmes, using the turnback's own favorite word.

To just what this scene might have led it is impossible to say, but just at that instant Anstey and two other second classmen came into the room, and the turnback seized the opportunity to get away.

Though Cadet Prescott was so cheerful over his injury he was in a good deal of pain as the evening wore on.

Every hour or so Goodwin or the other surgeon came in to see him.

Though Prescott could hardly be expected to understand it, the surgeons were pleased, on the whole, with the pain. Had there been numbness, instead, the surgeons would have looked for paralysis.

Later in the night Dick asked Captain Goodwin if he could not administer some light opiate.

"You are willing to be a soldier, I know, Mr. Prescott," replied the surgeon.

"Be sure of that, sir," replied the young man, wincing.

"Then try to bear the pain. It is the best indication with which we have to deal. It is one of the most hopeful symptoms for which we could look. Besides, your descriptions of the pain, and of its locality, if you are accurate, will

give us our best indication of what to do for you."

"Then I don't want any opiate, sir," replied Dick bluntly. "I don't care whether I'm kept here a day or a year, or what I have to suffer, only as long as I don't have to lose an active career in the service!"

"Good for you, my young soldier," beamed the surgeon, patting the cadet's hand. "The superintendent telephoned over, a little while ago, to ask how you were. I told him that your grit was the best we had seen here in a long time."

"Thank you, sir."

"And the superintendent replied, dryly enough, that he expected that from your general record. The superintendent sent you his personal regards."

"Thank you, sir, and the superintendent, too."

"Oh, and a lot of others have been inquiring about you, too—the K. C. and all of the professors and most of the instructors. And at least a small regiment of cadets have tramped down as far as the office door also. I've been saving the names of inquirers, and will tell you the names in the morning. All except the names of the cadets, that is. There was too big a mob of cadets for us to attempt to keep the names."

It was a painful, restless, feverish night for Prescott. He slept a part of the time, though when he did his sleep was filled with nightmares.

The surgeons won his gratitude by their devotion to his interests. The first half of the night Captain Goodwin was in at least every hour. The latter half of the night it was Lieutenant Sadtler who made the round.

By permission Cadet Holmes came to the hospital office just after breakfast.

It was a gloomy face that poor Greg wore back to barracks with him.

The surgeons had spoken hopefully, but—

"Brains always work better than brute force," Haynes told himself, struggling hard to preserve his self-esteem.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MAN MOVING IN A DARK ROOM

MAY came, and, with the gorgeous blossoms of that month, Dick Prescott left the hospital.

He was able to walk fairly well, and was returned to study and recitations, though excused from all drills or any form of military duty.

Not quite all the old erectness of carriage was there, though Dick hoped and prayed daily that it would return.

He had been cautioned to take the best of care of himself. He had been warned that he was still on probation, so far as his physical condition was concerned.

"A sudden bad wrench, and you might undo all that has been done for you so far," was the surgeons' hint.

So Prescott, though permitted to march with his sections to recitations, and to fall in at the meal formations, was far from feeling reassured as to his ability to remain in the service.

He was to have a physical examination after the academic year was finished, and other examinations, if needed, during the summer encampment.

And well enough the young man knew this meant that, if he was found to be permanently disqualified in body, he would be dropped from the cadet corps as soon as the decision was reached.

"Do you know," muttered Greg vengefully, "Haynes had the cheek to come here and ask after you?"

"Did he?" inquired Dick.

"Yes; he pretended to be sorry about your accident."

"Perhaps he really was," returned Prescott.

"What? After his trick in pushing you from the train?"

"I hope he has lived to regret that," said Dick quietly.

"You're not quite a lunatic, old ramrod, are you?" asked Greg wonderingly.

"Oh, I've heard of fellows being bad, and then afterward repenting," murmured Dick. "Perhaps this has been the case with Haynes. You see, Greg, lying there in hospital, day after day, I had time to do a lot of thinking. Perhaps I learned to be just a trifle less severe in judging other fellows."

Anstey visited as often as he could. He and Greg did all they could to coach Prescott over the hard work that he had missed.

"There isn't going to be anything in the academic work to bother you," promised Anstey. "You'll have lots of chance to pull through in the general review."

"It's only the physical side of the case that gives me any uneasiness," replied Dick. "And I'm not worrying about that, either."

"I should say not, suh!" replied the Virginian with emphasis. "I had a chance to talk with Captain Goodwin, one day, without being too fresh, and he told me, old ramrod, that your work in athletics did a lot to save your back from faring worse. He said you were built with unusual strength in the back, and that many a hard tug in the football scrimmages had made you strong where you most need to be strong now."

"Now let's get back to work with our old ramrod, Anstey," cautioned Greg.

"Surely, suh, with all my heart," nodded Anstey. "But by day after to-morrow he'll have caught up with us, and be coaching us along for the general review."

The hard work that Dick had done through March and in early April now stood him in excellent stead. He had, really, only to make sure of the work that he had missed while at hospital. As to reviewing the earlier work of the second term, there was not the slightest need.

By the time that the general review was half through it was plain enough that Dick Prescott's class standing was going to be better than it had ever been before. In fact, he was slated to make the middle of this class.

"I'll be above the middle of the class next year, if the fates allow me to remain on with the corps," Dick promised himself and his friends.

"Oh, you'll be in the Army, suh, until you're retired for age, suh," predicted Anstey with great gravity.

The latter part of May passed swiftly for the busy cadets. The first class men were dreaming of their commissions in the more real Army beyond West Point; the present third classmen were looking forward with intense longing to the furlough that would begin as soon as they had stepped over the line into the second class. The new plebes were looking forward to summer encampment with a mixture of longing and dread—the latter emotion on account of the hazing that might come to them in the life under the khaki-colored canvas.

As the days slipped by, Prescott began to have more and more of his old, firm step. He began to feel sure, too, that the surgeons would have no more fault to find with his condition.

"Why, I could ride a horse in fine shape to-

day," declared Prescott, on one of the last days in May.

"Could you?" demanded Cadet Holmes quizzically.

"Perhaps I had better amend that bit of brag," laughed Dick. "What I meant was that I could ride as well, to-day, as I ever did."

"Don't be in a hurry to try it, old ramrod," advised Greg with a frown. "Be satisfied that you're doing well enough as it is. Don't be in a hurry to joggle up a spine that has had about as much as it could stand."

"I'll bet you I ride in the exhibition riding before the Board of Visitors," proposed Prescott earnestly.

"I shall be mightily disappointed in your judgment if you attempt it without first having received a positive order," retorted Greg. "Don't be a chump, old ramrod."

The exhibition before the Board of Visitors to which Dick had referred is one of the annual features of West Point life. The Board is appointed by the President of the United States. The Board goes to West Point a few days before graduation and thoroughly "inspects" the Academy and all its workings. The Board of Visitors impressively attends graduation exercises. Afterwards the Board writes its report on the Military Academy, and suggests

anything that occurs to the members as being an improvement on the way things are being already conducted by Army officers who know their business.

One man in the second class was going badly to pieces in these closing days of the academic year. That man was turnback Haynes. His trouble was that he had allowed a private and senseless grudge to get uppermost in his mind. He lived more for the gratification of that grudge than he did for the realization of his own ambitions.

"This confounded Prescott has escaped me, so far, though his last experience was a narrow squeak. I've had two tries—and, by the great blazes! the third 'ime is said never to fail. He's in such bad shape now that it won't take much of a push to put him over the edge of physical condition. But how can I do it?"

So much thought did the turnback give to this problem that he fell further and further behind in general review. He was moving rapidly toward the bottom of the class.

Worse, he began to dream of his grudge by night. In his dreams Haynes always reviewed his hopes of successful villainy, or else found himself trying to put through some new bit of profound rascality. Always the turnback awoke from such dreams to find himself in a cold sweat.

"I'll hit the right scheme—the real chance—yet!" the plotter told himself, as he tossed restlessly at night, while his roommate, Cadet Pierson, slept soundly the sleep of the just and decent.

"Haynesy, what's the matter with you?" demanded Pierson one morning, as he watched his roommate going toward the washstand.

"What do you mean?" demanded Haynes, with the pallor of guilt on his face for a moment.

"Why, you always look so confoundedly ragged when you get up mornings. You used to wake up looking fresh and rosy. Now, you look like the ghost of an evil deed."

"Huh!" growled Haynes, plunging his hands into the water. "I'm all right."

"I wish I could believe you!" muttered the puzzled Pierson under his breath.

"It's near time to get Prescott, if I'm going to," Haynes told himself a dozen times a day.

In fact, the matter preyed so constantly on his mind that the turnback walked through each day in a perpetual though subdued state of nervous fever.

The next night Pierson awoke with a start.

At first the cadet couldn't understand why he should feel so creepy. He was a good sleeper, and there had been no noise.

Hadn't there, though? It came again. And now Cadet Pierson rubbed his eyes and half rose on his cot, leaning his head on one hand.

Now, with intense interest, he watched the proceedings of his roommate, turnback Haynes, who was up and moving stealthily about the room, every action being clearly revealed in the bright moonlight that was streaming through the windows.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ROW IN THE RIDING DETACHMENT

"WOW, what on earth is the fellow doing?" muttered the puzzled Pierson.

Haynes had gone over to his fatigue blouse, the left front of which he was examining very closely.

Then the turnback began to mutter indistinctly.

"Why, Haynesy is walking and talking in his sleep!" decided Pierson. "Queer! I never knew him to do anything like that before. He must have something on his mind."

Pierson had read, somewhere, that it is never wise to disturb a sleepwalker, there being a risk that the sleepwalker, if aroused too suddenly, may suffer collapse from fright.

"I wonder what on earth old Haynesy can have on his mind?" pondered Pierson. "Oh, well, whatever it is, it is no business of mine."

With that Pierson let his head return to his pillow.

"That did the trick for Prescott—ha! ha!" muttered the turnback.

"What on earth did the trick, and what trick was it?" muttered watching Pierson, curious de-

spite the admitted fact that it was all none of his business.

After a few moments more Haynes went back to his cot, pulled the sheet and a single blanket up over him, and became quiet.

"It wouldn't do any good to ask Haynesy anything about this," decided Pierson. "He won't remember anything about it in the morning."

So Pierson went to sleep again. When he awoke in the morning he was more than half inclined to believe that he had dreamed it all.

The general reviews were drawing toward their close. In two studies Haynes was making a poor showing, though he believed that he would pass.

Riding drills were being held daily now. Preparations were being made for the stirring exhibition of cavalry work that was to be shown before the Board of Visitors.

On the afternoon of the day before the visitors were due, Greg started up at the call for cavalry drill.

So did Dick.

"Where are you going?" challenged Cadet Holmes.

"To cavalry drill," responded Cadet Prescott.

"Who said you could?"

"The K. C. for one; Captain Albutt for another."

Greg looked, as he felt, aghast at the idea, but he managed to blurt out:

"What about the rainmakers?"

"Captain Goodwin has examined me again."

"Surely, he doesn't approve of your riding yet, Dick?"

"He didn't say whether he did or not."

"Then——"

"But he certified that I was fit to ride."

"Dick, you didn't have to do this——"

"No; but I want to be restored to full duty. Captain Albutt has informed me that the horse assigned to me will be a dependable, tractable animal, and I shall be on my guard and use my head."

"I don't like this," muttered Greg, as he fastened on his leggings.

"I didn't suppose you would, so I didn't tell you anything about it."

By the time that the second call sounded both young men were prepared, and joined the stream of cadets pouring out of barracks.

Other cadets than Greg expressed their astonishment when they saw Prescott in the detachment.

"Is this wise, old ramrod?" asked Anstey anxiously.

"A soldier shouldn't play baby forever," returned Dick. "And I have permission, or I wouldn't be here."

"I don't like it," muttered Anstey.

Furlong, Griffin and Dobbs all had something to say.

Haynes didn't let a word escape him, but his eyes lighted with evil joy.

"Now, I can finish the job, I guess," throbbed the evil one.

The detachment to which Prescott and some of his friends belonged was formed and marched through one of the sally-ports. Just beyond, a corporal and a squad of men from the Regular Army cavalry sat in saddle. Each enlisted man held the bridle of another horse than the one he rode. As the corporal dismounted his men, the cadets, at the word from their marcher, moved forward and took their mounts. At the command, the detachment rode forward, by twos, at a walk, down the road that led to the cavalry drill ground below the old South Gate.

It was Greg who rode beside his chum. In the drill, later, when in platoon front or column of fours, it would be Haynes who would ride on Dick's left.

The turnback had already made sure that his useful black pin was securely fastened inside his fatigue blouse.

Arrived at the drill ground, the cadets dismounted, standing by their horses in a little group until Captain Albutt should ride out of one of the cavalry stables and take command.

Haynes, with a rapid throbbing of his pulses, bent forward and down, pretending to examine his horse's nigh forefoot.

As he did so, with an expertness gained of practice, Haynes slipped the head of the black pin in under the front of the sole of his right boot. Then he straightened up again, chatting with Pierson.

"I say, Haynes," drawled Anstey, a few moments later, glancing at the turnback's right foot, "that's a dangerous-looking thing you have in your boot."

"What's that?" demanded Haynes, losing color somewhat, yet pretending to be surprised.

"That long pin, sticking out of the front of your right boot," continued Anstey, pointing.

Haynes glanced down, saw the thing, and pretended to be greatly astonished.

"How did I get that thing in my shoe?" he cried.

Then, with an appearance of indolent indifference that was rather overdone, the turnback stooped low enough to extract the pin.

But his fingers trembled in the act, and half a dozen cadets noted the fact.

"That's a reckless bit of business, Haynes," continued Anstey in a voice that did not appear to be accusing.

"Reckless?" gasped Greg Holmes. "It's criminal!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Haynes, straightening himself and glaring coldly into Holmes's eyes.

But Greg was one of the last fellows in the world to permit himself to be "frozen."

"I mean what I say, Haynes," he retorted plumply. "With that thing in the toe of your boot something would be likely to happen when some other horse's flank bumped you on the right. And, by George, it's Prescott who rides at your right in platoon or column of fours!"

Greg shot a look full of keen suspicion at the turnback.

"And it was Prescott who rode on your right the day he was thrown from Satan!" flashed Greg, his face going white from the depth of his sudden feeling. "Haynes, did you have that pin in the toe of your boot the day that Prescott was thrown in the riding hall?"

"You——" Haynes began, at white heat, clenching his free fist.

"Answer me!" broke in Greg insistently.

"I did not!"

"I don't believe you!" shot back Cadet Holmes.

"Confound you, sir, do you mean to call me a liar?" hissed the turnback.

"Yes!" replied Greg promptly.

Haynes dropped his bridle, stepping toward Greg Holmes, who, however, neither flinched nor looked worried.

"Hold my lines, Dobbs," urged Pierson, passing his bridle over to a fellow classman.

Then Pierson sprang in front of Greg, facing his roommate.

"Softly, Haynes!" cried Pierson warningly.

"What is this to you?" demanded the turnback hotly.

"I am under the impression," replied Pierson, "that this is not a personal matter so much as it is a class affair."

But Haynes, feeling that he was almost cornered, became reckless and desperate.

"This is a personal matter, Pierson. Stand aside until I knock that cur down."

"From any other man in the detachment," spoke Greg bitterly, "I would regard the use of that word an insult. Haynes, if you hit me, I shall knock you clean into the Hudson River. But I will not accept any challenge to fight until the class has passed on this matter."

"The class has nothing to do with it," insisted Haynes.

"I think the class has," broke in Pierson. "When the time comes I shall have considerable to say."

"Then say it now!" commanded Haynes, glaring at his roommate.

"I will," nodded Pierson. "The other night, Haynes, I was awakened to find you walking about the room in your sleep. You also talked in your sleep. At the time I could make nothing of it all. Now, I think I understand."

Then Cadet Pierson swiftly recounted what he had seen and what he had heard that night in the room.

"You were fingering something on the left front of your blouse, and while doing so, you made the distinct remark that this was what had done the trick for Prescott," charged Pierson. "I did not see what it was that you were fingering, but the next day, the first chance I got, I, too, examined the left front of your blouse. I found a small, black pin fastened there. It has been fastened there every time since when I have had a chance to look at your fatigue blouse hanging on the wall."

"I am not responsible for what I say when I'm sleepwalking," cried Haynes in a rage. "And, besides, Pierson, you're lying."

"I'll wager that not a man here believes I'm lying," retorted Pierson coolly.

"No, no! You're no liar, Pierson!" cried a dozen men at once.

"Is there a black pin inside your blouse at this moment?" challenged Greg.

"None of your business," cried the turnback hoarsely.

"I demand that you show up, or stand accused," insisted Cadet Holmes.

"I'll show up nothing, or take any orders from anyone who tries to lie my good name away," retorted Haynes. "But at least two of you will have to fight me mighty soon."

"I won't fight you," retorted Greg bluntly, "until the class declares you to be a man fit to fight with."

"Nor I, either," rejoined Pierson decisively.

"Stand aside, you hound, and let me get at that cur behind you!" cried Haynes hoarsely.

"Attention!" called the detachment marcher formally. "The instructor for the day!"

Captain Albutt rode out of the nearest cavalry stable, mounted on his own pure white horse.

At the order of the marcher each cadet fell back to the lines of his own mount.

When Captain Albutt reached the detachment he saw nothing to indicate the disturbance that had just occurred.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DECREE OF "COVENTRY"

"PREPARE to mount! Mount!"

Some preliminary commands of drill were executed. Then the serious work of the hour began.

Never had Captain Albutt commanded at a better bit of cavalry work than was done this afternoon by members of the first and second classes.

The wheelings, the facings and all the manoeuvres at the different gaits were executed with precision and dash. All the movements in troop and squadron were carried out to perfection.

To the instructor, it was plain that the most perfect esprit de corps existed. The cadets were acting with a singleness and devotedness of purpose which showed plainly that the perfect trooper was the sole subject of thought in their minds. At least, so the instructor thought, from the results obtained.

Even Haynes's face was inexpressive as he rode.

Greg was as jaunty as though he had not an unkind thought toward anyone in the world.

Cadet Prescott did not betray a sign of any thought save to do his duty perfectly.

Yet, every time that his horse was brought close to Haynes's, Prescott had his eyes open for any foul play that might be attempted by the turnback.

"If the young men do as splendidly to-morrow before the Board of Visitors," thought Captain Albutt, "I shall feel that my year of work here has been a grand success. Jove, what a born trooper everyone of these young fellows seems to be!"

At last the drill was finished. In detachments, the young cadet troopers returned to the road between the administration building and the academic building.

Here each detachment dismounted, surrendered its horses to a waiting detail of enlisted cavalrymen, and then marched in to barracks.

As soon as the young men had removed their riding leggings, and the dust from their uniforms, most of them descended into the quadrangle.

Haynes reached his room just an instant behind Pierson.

"See here, Pierson, you cad, what did you——"

"Oh, shut up!" replied Pierson, with a weary sigh.

"Don't you speak to me like that, sir!" cried Haynes warningly, as he stepped over to where his roommate was busy with a clothes brush.

"I don't want to talk with you at all," retorted Pierson.

"You'll talk to me a lot, or you'll answer with your fists!"

"Fight with you? Bah!" growled the other man in disgust.

"You cad, you deliberately li——"

But Pierson, having put his brush away, turned on his heel and left the room.

Haynes paused for an instant, his face white with a new dread.

A cadet stands low, indeed, when another cadet will not resent being called a liar by him.

"This has kicked up an awful row against me, I guess," muttered the turnback, as he hastily cleaned himself. "I must get down into the quadrangle, mix with the fellows and set myself straight."

Full of this purpose, for he was not lacking in a certain quality of nerve and courage, Haynes went down to the quadrangle.

"I am afraid a good deal of feeling was aroused this afternoon, Furlong," began the turnback.

Then he gulped, clenched his fists and lost

color, for Cadet Furlong, without a word, had turned on his heel and walked away.

"Griffin, what does Fur——"

Cadet Griffin, too, turned on his heel, passing on.

"Dobbs——"

It was Dobbs's turn to show his back and stroll away.

"What the deuce has got into them all?" wondered Haynes, though his heart sank, for, much as he wanted to ignore the meaning, it was becoming plain to him.

Another cadet was passing along the walk. To him Haynes turned with an appealing face.

"Lewis," began the turnback, "I am afraid I shall have to ask you——"

Whatever it was, Lewis did not wait to hear. He looked at Haynes as though he saw nothing there, and joined a little group of cadets beyond.

"Confound these puppies!" growled Haynes to himself. "They're all fellows that I hazed when they were plebes, and they haven't forgiven me. I see clearly enough that, if I am to have an explanation, or get a chance to make one, I must do it through the members of my old class."

Some distance down the quadrangle stood Brayton and Spurlock, first classmen and captains in the cadet battalion.

"They're high-minded, decent fellows," said Haynes to himself. "I will go to them and get this nasty business set straight."

Past several groups of cadets stalked Haynes, affecting not to see any of the fellows. But these cadets appeared equally indifferent to being recognized.

Brayton and Spurlock were talking in low tones when the turnback approached them.

"Brayton," began Haynes, "I want to ask you to do me a bit of a favor."

Brayton did not stop his conversation with Spurlock, nor did he show any other sign of having heard the turnback.

"Brayton! I beg your pardon!"

But the first classman did not turn.

"Spurlock," asked Haynes, in a thick voice, "are you in this tommy-rot business, too?"

"Spurlock, however, seemed equally deaf.

"Then see here, both of you——" insisted Haynes, choking with anger.

The two first classmen turned their backs, walking slowly off.

There was no chance to doubt the fate that had overtaken him. Haynes had been "sent to Coventry." Henceforth, as long as he remained in the corps of cadets, he was to be "cut." No other cadet could or would speak to him, under the same penalty of also being sent to Coventry.

Henceforth the only speech that any cadet would have with him would be a necessary communication on official business. Socially there was no longer any Cadet Haynes at West Point.

Once, two years before, Haynes had helped to put this punishment on a plebe, who had soon after quitted the Academy.

Then Haynes had thought that sending another to Coventry was, under some circumstances, a fine proceeding. But now the like fate had befallen him!

"The fellows don't really mean it. They're excited now, but to-morrow they'll be sorry and call the whole foolishness off," thought the "cut" man, trying hard to swallow the obstinate lump that rose in his throat.

In the quadrangle, mostly in groups, were fully two hundred cadets. But not one of these young men would address a word to the exposed turnback.

"There's one satisfaction, anyway," thought Haynes savagely, as he walked blindly back toward the door of his own subdivision in barracks, "I can take it all out on the plebes!"

Just as he was going up the steps Haynes encountered a plebe coming out.

"Here, mister!" growled Haynes. "Swing around with you! At attention, sir! What's your name, mister?"

But the plebe did not even pause. He did not avert his head, but he took no pains to look at Haynes, merely passing the turnback and gaining the quadrangle below.

Now the utter despair of his position came over Haynes. How suddenly it had come! And even Haynes, with his four years at West Point, could hardly realize how the Coventry had been pronounced and carried out in so very few minutes after release from cavalry drill.

Tears of rage and humiliation in his eyes, Haynes stumbled to his room. Once inside he shunned the window, but stumbled to his chair at the study table, and sank down, his face buried in his arms.

"Oh, I'll make somebody suffer for this!" he growled.

Out in the quadrangle, now that the turnback was gone, the main theme of conversation was the discovery and exposure of the afternoon.

Pierson was requested to repeat his statement to a large group of first and second classmen.

"I don't believe a man could get a pin stuck into the toe of his boot accidentally, in the way that Haynes had his pin arranged," declared Brayton. "Has one of you fellows a pin to lend me?"

A pin being passed, Brayton sat down on a convenient step and tried to adjust the pin be-

tween the sole and the upper of the toe of his boot.

"I can force it in a little way," admitted Brayton, "but see how the pin wobbles. It would fall out if I moved my foot hard. Some of the rest of you try it."

Other cadets repeated the experiment.

"I'll tell you, fellows," said Spurlock at last; "a fellow couldn't accidentally get a pin in that position, and hold it firm there. But I know that, after repeated trying, and working to fit the pin, I could finally get matters so that I could quickly fit a pin that would hold in place and be effective."

"Of course," nodded Lewis. "It can be done, but only by design."

"And that was the very way that Prescott's horse was enraged, so that old ramrod got his awful tumble!" exclaimed Greg bitterly.

"You believe, now, that the whole thing was a dirty, deliberate trick, don't you?" asked Spurlock of Prescott.

"I am pretty sure it must have been," nodded Dick.

"Then," declared Brayton, "the whole thing is something for you second classmen to settle among yourselves. In the first place, it is your own class affair. In the next place, we men of the first class are practically out of the Military

Academy already. It will do the first class no good to take any action, because we shall not be here to carry out any decree."

"You can advise us, though," suggested Holmes.

"And we'll do so gladly," nodded Brayton.

"Then do we need to hold a class meeting, and vote to make the Coventry permanent?"

"Hardly, I should say," replied Brayton. "You've already started the cut, and it can be continued without any regular action—unless Haynes should have the cheek to try to brazen it out. If he does insist on staying here at the Military Academy, you can easily take up the matter during the summer encampment."

"It would seem rather strange for me to call a class meeting, when the whole affair concerns me," suggested Dick.

"Oh, you don't need to call the meeting, old ramrod," advised Spurlock. "A self-appointed committee of the class can call the meeting. You can open the meeting, of course, Prescott, and then you can call any other member of the class to take the chair."

"I wonder if it will be necessary to drum the fellow out of the class formally?" asked Anstey.

"Only time can show you that," replied Brayton. "Better just wait and see what action the

fellow Haynes will take for himself. He may have the sense to resign."

Resign? That word was not in Haynes's own dictionary of conduct. After his first few moments of despair, on gaining his room, the turnback had risen from his chair, his face showing a courage and resolution worthy of a better cause.

"Those idiots may think they have 'got' me," he muttered, shaking his fist toward the quadrangle. "One of these days they'll know me better! I'll make life miserable for some of those pups yet!"

Just before it was time for the call to dress parade Pierson came hurrying into the room to hasten into his full-dress uniform.

Haynes, already dressed with scrupulous care, looked curiously at his roommate. But Pierson did not appear to see him.

Haynes stepped over to the window, drumming listlessly on the sill. At length he turned around.

"Pierson," he asked, "have the fellows sent me to Coventry?"

"You don't need to ask that," replied the other coldly.

"Is it because of Prescott?"

"Yes. And now, will you stop bothering me with the sound of your voice?"

"Pierson, you know, when a fellow is cut by the corps, his roommate is not required to avoid conversation with the unlucky one."

"I know that," replied Pierson coldly. "But I've had all I want of you and from you. Except when it is absolutely necessary I shall not answer or address you hereafter."

"How long am I to stay in Coventry?"

Pierson acted as though he did not hear.

"Has formal action been taken, or is this just a flash of prejudice, Pierson?"

No answer.

"Humph!"

The call to form and march on to the parade ground was sounding. Snatching up his rifle, Haynes stepped out and joined the others.

Haynes did not receive even as much as a cold glance.

"I'm less than a bit of mud to them!" thought the turnback bitterly. "These fellows would step around a patch of mud, just to avoid dirtying their shoes."

It was a relief to hear the command to fall in. Haynes felt still better when the battalion stepped away at its rhythmic step. He did not have to look at any of his contemptuous comrades now, nor did he need a word from them.

Somehow, though in a daze, the turnback got through dress parade without reproof from any

of the watchful cadet officers. Then, almost immediately after dress parade, came the hardest ordeal of all.

Once more, this time in fatigue uniform, the turnback had to fall in at supper formation. With the rest he marched away to cadet mess hall, found his place at table and occupied it.

During the meal merry conversation ran riot around the tables. Haynes was the only man among the gray-clad cadets who was left absolutely alone.

After supper, while Pierson lounged outside, Haynes went back to his room.

Pacing the floor in his deep misery and agitation, he took this vow to himself:

"I won't let myself be driven from the Military Academy! No matter what these idiots try to do to me—no matter what indignities they may heap upon me, I'll keep silent and fight my way through the Military Academy! I will receive my commission, and go into the Army. But that fellow Prescott shall never become an officer in the Army, no matter what I have to risk to stop him!"

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCLUSION

FOR most of the young men at West Point the academic year now came swiftly and joyously to an end.

True, some score and a half of plebes were found deficient, and sent back to their homes.

The same thing happened to a few of the third classmen.

All of the members of the first class succeeded in passing and in graduating into the Army.

The poor plebes who had failed had been mournfully departing, one at a time.

These unhappy, doleful young men felt strangely uncouth in the citizens' clothes that they had regained from the cadet stores.

Yet everyone of these plebes received many a handshake from the upper classmen and a hearty good wish for success in life.

More doleful still felt the dropped third classmen, who had been at the Military Academy for two years, and who had thoroughly expected to "get through" into the Army somehow.

It was now a little before the time when cadets must hasten to quarters to attire themselves for dress parade.

Several score of cadets still lingered in the quadrangle when Greg Holmes and Pierson suddenly appeared, heading straight for one of the largest groups, in which Dick Prescott stood.

"Heard any news lately?" asked Greg, a pleased twinkle in his eyes.

"Nothing startling. We've been supplying new, dry handkerchiefs to the poor, late plebes," answered Brayton.

"Haven't heard about that fellow Haynes?" asked Greg.

"Nothing," admitted Brayton.

"Well, you see,' exclaimed Pierson, "Haynes made up his mind to disregard the grand cut. He determined to stick it out, anyway, even for a whole year."

"He'll have a sweet time of it, then," put in Spurlock dryly. "I never heard of a fellow who got the general cut lasting a whole year here before."

"That was Haynes's decision, anyway," went on Pierson. "This is no guess work. The fellow told me so himself."

"I reckon, suh, maybe we'll be able to change his mind," drawled Anstey.

"No you won't," broke in Greg decisively. "Haynes got in bad on the last two days of general review. Chemistry and Spanish verbs threw him. So he was ordered up for a writ

(written examination) in both subjects. He fessed frozen on both of them. He applied for a new examination in a fortnight, but the fact that Haynes was already a turnback went against him."

"He's 'found,' eh?" questioned Brayton, smiling gleefully.

"Dropped," nodded Pierson.

"Fired!" added Greg, with a look of satisfaction. "There's no getting around the truth of the old superstition, fellows!"

The "old superstition" to which Holmes referred is one intensely believed in in the cadet corps. While there is nothing whatever to prevent a sneak from being admitted to the United States Military Academy, the cadets believe firmly that a dishonorable fellow is bound to be caught, before he graduates, and that he will be kicked promptly out of the service by one means or another.

"Has the fellow gone yet?" inquired Spurlock.

"He'll slip away while the rest of us are away at dress parade, I guess," responded Pierson. "Haynes is in cit. clothes already, and is just fussing around a bit."

"He must feel fine!" muttered Brayton mus ingly. "I could almost say 'poor fellow.' "

"So could I," agreed Prescott, with a good

deal of feeling. "It would break my heart to be compelled to leave the corps, except at graduation, so I can imagine how any other fellow must feel."

"Oh, well, he'd never be happy in the Army, anyway," replied Spurlock. "Out in the Army the other officers can take care of a dishonorable comrade even more effectively than we do."

"What made Haynes fess out, I wonder?" pondered Brayton aloud.

"Being sent to Coventry got on his nerves so that he couldn't pull up enough at review and the writs," replied Pierson. "He wasn't one of the bright men, anyway, in the section rooms."

"By Jove, suh! There's the fellow now!" muttered Anstey.

The others turned slightly to see Haynes, out of the gray uniform that he had disgraced, wearing old cit. clothes and carrying a suit case, step out and cross the quadrangle to the office of the K. C.

A few minutes later, Haynes came out of the cadet guard house. Knowing that he would never have the ordeal to face again, Haynes summoned all his "brass" to the surface and stepped down the length of the quadrangle. He passed many groups of curious cadets, none of whom, however, sent a look or a word to him.

Then on out through the east sally-port strode Haynes. On the sidewalk beyond, he passed Captain Albutt. Haynes did not salute the officer; he didn't have to. Even had Haynes saluted, Captain Albutt could not have returned this military courtesy, for Haynes was no longer a member of the American Military establishment.

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On the afternoon of the day following the graduating exercises came to a brilliant finish at Cullum Hall. Brayton, Spurlock and their classmates were honorably through with West Point, their new careers about to open before them.

Cadet Dick Prescott came forth from the exercises, a look of radiant happiness on his face.

He had been ordered before a board of surgeons that morning. Just as a formality he was to go before a medical board again in August.

"But that's only a piece of red tape," Captain Goodwin had explained to him. "By wonderful good luck, or rather, no doubt, thanks to Captain Albutt's gallantry, your spine is now as sound as ever. Come before us in August, but I can tell you now that the August verdict will be O. K."

"My, but you look like the favorite uncle of

the candy kid!" muttered Greg, as the two chums in gray strode along together.

"Why shouldn't I?" retorted Dick. "My spine is all right, and I'm to stay in the service. Then besides, Greg, old fellow, think what we are now."

"Well, what are we?" asked Greg.

"First classmen! Only a year more, Greg, to the glorious old Army! Think of it, boy! In blue, in a year, and wearing shoulder-straps!"